

Town of Grafton



COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN

October, 2020

Prepared by: Community Opportunities Group, Inc.

This page is intentionally left blank.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Section 1: CPA in Grafton	2
Section 2: Community Context and Resources	9
Historic Overview.....	10
Demographic Profile	11
Community Assets	15
Section 3: Funding Criteria	26
Summary of CPA Goals and Priorities.....	33
Section 4: Committee Procedures and Policies.....	34
Appendices:.....	39
1. Public Engagement Summary	
2. Article 34 of Grafton Town Bylaws	
3. Grafton CPA Project Application Instructions	
4. Historic Preservation Eligibility Chart	
5. Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation	

This page is intentionally left blank.

Introduction

The Town of Grafton Community Preservation Committee ("CPC" or "the Committee") is pleased to present the 2020 Town of Grafton Community Preservation Plan. This Plan describes the process for administering the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in the Town of Grafton. The Plan presents a history of how the Town has used CPA funds, a projection of available funding, and a description of the procedures and policies that determine how the funds will be used. As required under the enabling legislation, M.G.L. c. 44B, the plan presents an analysis of local needs and goals for CPA program areas, and priorities and potential projects to utilize CPA funding over the coming years. It represents an informational document for the citizens of the Town, a guideline for applicants seeking project funding through the CPA, and a blueprint for this and future CPA Committees for updating the plan and making recommendations to Town Meeting for project funding.

This Plan was developed with assistance from a consultant, Community Opportunities Group, Inc., together with Committee members and Town staff through extensive outreach building on prior Town planning related to the CPA program areas. The Committee will make an ongoing effort to coordinate with many interest groups, including Town department heads and staff, boards and commissions, stakeholder organizations, and the general citizenry.

For additional information on the CPA statute and how it is being applied in municipalities across the State, visit the Community Preservation Coalition website at www.communitypreservation.org. For information on Grafton's Community Preservation activity, visit the City's CPC web page: <https://www.grafton-ma.gov/community-preservation-committee>

About the Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act, M.G.L. c. 44B, ("CPA") is a Massachusetts law passed in 2000 that allows participating cities and towns to create a dedicated fund for important projects that can greatly impact a community's character and quality of life. CPA funds support improvements in the program areas of Open Space & Recreation, Affordable Housing, and Historic Preservation.

CPA enables communities to raise money locally through a surcharge on property taxes (between 1% and 3%, as selected by the community). In addition to the property tax surcharge, the state contributes funds matching a portion of the revenues raised by the community. State funds used to match local CPA funds are collected through surcharges at the Registries of Deeds on transactions in all Massachusetts municipalities, which pay into the Commonwealth's Community Preservation Trust Fund. The actual percentage of matching grants varies from year to year, depending on the availability of funds in relation to the local contributions of participating communities, and the number of communities participating in the CPA.

Section 1: CPA in Grafton

The Town of Grafton was one of the first communities to adopt the Community Preservation Act in 2001. Grafton elected a 1.5% property tax surcharge and exempts the first \$100,000 of residential property value from the surcharge, and offers an additional exemption for “low income households”, as defined by Section 2 of the Community Preservation Act.¹ In 2020 the average surcharge on a single family residential property was \$79.

Consistent with the terms of the CPA, a committee was established in 2002 that has the responsibility to oversee CPA funds.² The committee has a total of nine members, consisting of four at large members appointed by the Select Board, and one representative each from the Town’s Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority, Planning Board, and Recreation Commission, each appointed by their respective committees. The CPC has two important functions: to evaluate community needs in the areas for which CPA funding can be used, and to make recommendations to Town Meeting for the use of CPA funds. CPA funds cannot be appropriated or spent without the recommendation of the CPC and subsequent approval by Town Meeting. In the process of determining how CPA funds are to be used, the CPC initially prepared a Community Preservation Plan in 2004 that identified goals and priorities for each program area. This plan represents an update of the 2004 plan.

All citizens are welcome to attend the Committee’s meetings. The times and locations of these meetings are posted on the Town website, <https://www.grafton-ma.gov/>.

Written comments or questions are welcome and may be submitted via email to the Committee Administrative Assistant.

Funding Determination

To determine which projects should be considered, the CPC established an application process whereby grants are distributed to projects that fulfill the goals and needs that the CPC has identified. A copy of the application may be downloaded from the CPC’s web page. Eligible applicants include Town entities, nonprofit organizations, and other members of the community.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 448 and the Town’s Bylaw, the CPC evaluates community needs in consultation with existing municipal boards, and holds one or more public hearings on the needs, possibilities, and resources of the Town. A description of engagement activities and list of Town departments, boards and committees, and partner

Annual Timeline	
Optional Grantwriting Workshop	First Thursday of November
Applications must be received for Spring Town Meeting	On or by February 1
Applications presented to CPC	Fourth Thursday of March
Optional Grantwriting Workshop	Fourth Thursday of April
Annual Town Meeting	Second Monday in May
CPC Annual Hearing on Community Needs and Priorities	Fourth Thursday of June
Applications must be received for Semi-Annual TM	On or by July 1
Applications presented to CPC	Fourth Thursday of August
Semi-Annual Town Meeting	Third Monday in October

¹ Those wishing to apply for an income-based exemption must apply annually through the City Assessor’s office.

² Article 34 of the Grafton Town Bylaws. See Appendix 2.

organizations who have provided input in the preparation of this plan is provided in Appendix 1. The CPC also gathers information from various Town plans, including the Open Space & Recreation Plan (2019), Housing Production Plan (2018), the Town's Master Plan (2001), and numerous additional plans acknowledged below.

Plans Referenced in Establishing CPA Context, Goals, Priorities, and Opportunities

- Master Plan 2001
- Community Preservation Plan 2004
- Blackstone Canal Preservation Study 2005
- Phase I Archeological Intensive Survey of Hassanamesitt Woods Property, 2005
- South Grafton Villages Master Plan, 2006
- Urban River Visions 2 Grafton Charrette, 2007
- Grafton Reconnaissance Report, Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, 2007
- Landscape Master Plan for Fisherville Mill, 2015
- Grafton Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2016
- Housing Trust Action Plan, 2017
- North Grafton Transit Village Strategic Plan 2017
- Fisherville Mill Riverwalk Feasibility Study 2018
- Community Resilience Building Workshop, 2018
- Housing Production Plan 2018
- Grafton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2019
- Grafton ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan, 2019

CPA Funding History

Since Grafton adopted the Community Preservation Act, the Town has used this resource to facilitate major investments that preserve the character of the community and enhance its quality of life. Between 2002 and 2019, the Town generated \$5,453,000 in local surcharge revenue plus \$2,161,000 in distributions from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund, for a total of nearly \$8,000,000.

Distributions from the state's CPA Trust Fund are highly variable. In the first several years the state matched 100 percent of local CPA funds raised. (See Figure 1) From 2009 until 2020 the match ranged from 67.62 percent to 17.2 percent, falling lower as the state's CPA Trust Fund dwindled and more communities joined the program. In 2019, the Legislature passed a bill to permanently increase revenue to the CPA Trust Fund through an increase in fees at the Registry of Deeds beginning in FY2021. The Legislature also transferred \$20M in surplus funds to the CPA Trust Fund, enabling the state to supplement the 2020 match.

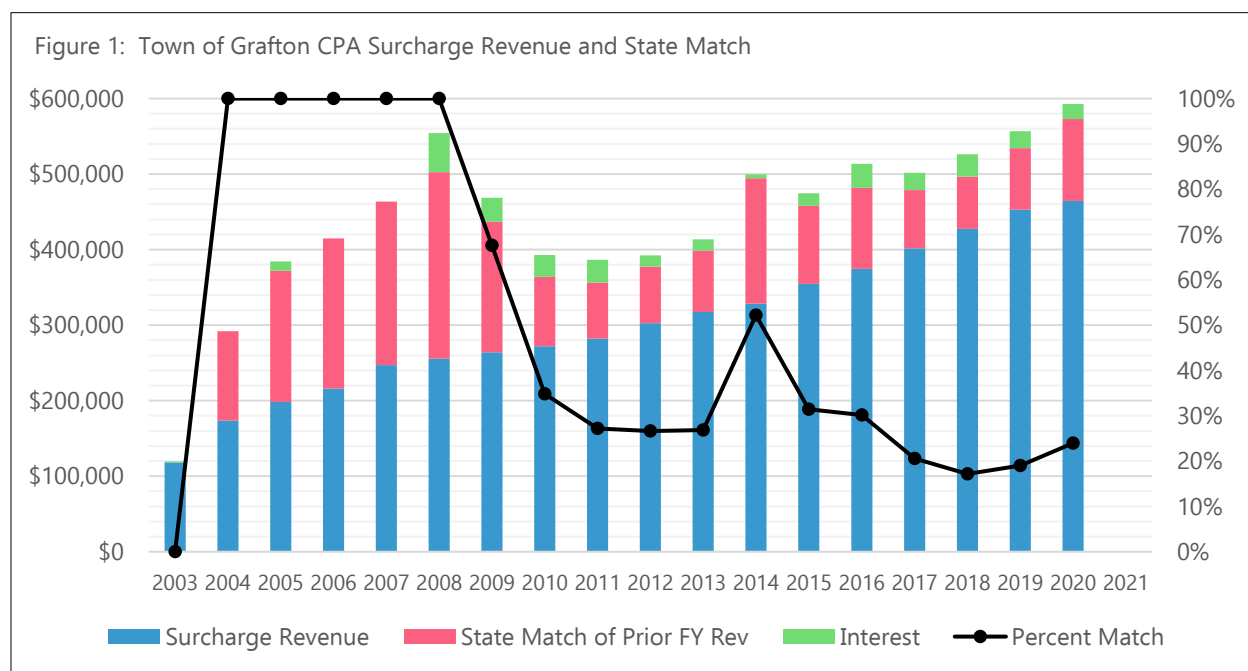
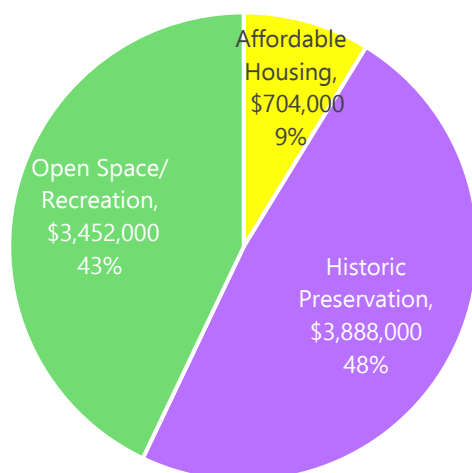


Figure 2: Grafton CPA Commitments by Program Area 2003-2019



Between 2003 and 2019 Grafton committed approximately \$7,679,000 CPA funds. As shown in Figure 2, nearly half of the funds contributed to historic preservation projects, and almost as much funding covered open space and recreation projects. The total funds committed include two projects for which the Town bonded against future CPA revenue and which still have outstanding principal: Acquisition of Pell Farm (\$1.2 million) and Town House Restoration (\$1.1 million). Because of the inclusion of the projects that have been bonded against future revenue, the total committed funds exceed the amount of CPA revenue that has been raised over this time period. Therefore, although the Town commits 10 percent of the annual revenues to affordable housing each

year, affordable housing represents less than 10% of the total CPA funds that the Town has committed. Since 2007 funds reserved for affordable housing have been transferred to the Grafton Affordable Housing Trust upon recommendation of the CPC and approval by Town Meeting.

Table 1 shows a summary of sites or categories of projects for which CPA funds have been used between 2003 and 2019. Projects for which the Town bonded CPA funds included restoration and accessibility improvements to the Grafton Town House, and acquisition of Pell Farm and Hassanamesit Woods. (The latter has been paid off, while outstanding balances remain on the other two.) Several sites have

benefitted from multiple rounds of funding to address different phases or elements of resource protection/preservation.

Table 1: CPA Project History				
Site	Year(s) Funded	Open Space / Recreation	Historic Preservation	Affordable Housing
Ekblaw Landing	2003, 2006			
Hassanamesit Woods	2003, 2005, 2007, 2011			
South Grafton Community House	2003, 2007, 2008, 2009			
Airport Park	2004, 2014			
Grafton Historical Society	2004, 2010, 2012, 2013			
Plans and Historic Inventories	2004, 2005, 2016, 2019			
Riverview Park	2004, 2008, 2011			
Silver Lake Beach	2004, 2007, 2012, 2016			
South Grafton Mill Village	2004, 2014			
Blackstone Engine House	2005			
Hennessey Barn	2005			
Grafton Public Library	2006, 2009, 2015, 2017			
Stone Arch Bridge	2006, 2016, 2017			
Affordable Housing Trust	Annually 2007-2019			
Grafton Town House	2008, 2009, 2010, 2014			
Pell Farm	2008			
Cisco Homestead	2009, 2012, 2016, 2019			
Mill Villages Park	2010, 2016			
Perry Hill Playground	2013			
Great Meadows Gateway	2015			
Institute Woods Trail	2018			
Grafton Lions Club Dauphinais Park	2019			
Grafton Town Common	2019			
Silver Lake Conservation Area	2019			

Towns can use up to five percent of CPA funds annually for administrative costs. Historically Grafton used only a small portion of its allowed operating budget each year. In FY2020 the Town increased its operating budget to hire a part time administrative assistant to support the CPC, and used administrative funds for the preparation of this plan. Paid support with documentation and grant monitoring helps to ensure transparency and to see that CPA funds are spent appropriately and in compliance with applicable laws. Administrative funds may also be used for expenses such as advertising, planning, public engagement, due diligence, or other activities that enable the Committee to identify community needs or evaluate proposals. Funds that are appropriated for administration but not spent within a calendar year are returned to the general reserve to be available for future projects.

Historic Preservation Project Highlights

- Fire safety and accessibility improvements to the Town-owned Town House building, entailing a \$1.1 million bond.
- Preservation of Stone Arch Bridge, and the creation of a pedestrian path across the Quinsigamond River in North Grafton.
- Restoration of Cisco Homestead, home of the Nipmuc Nation.
- Rehabilitation of the Town-owned former South Grafton library now occupied by the Grafton Historical Society. CPA funds have also helped to preserve artifacts belonging to the Historical Society.
- Blackstone Engine House No. 3, Farnumsville, South Grafton.
- Rehabilitation and accessibility improvements to the South Grafton Community House.



Open Space & Recreation Project Highlights

- Rehabilitation of Perry Hill Playground in North Grafton.
- Creation of canoe launch on the Quinsigamond River at Ekblaw Landing.
- Acquisition of 153 acre Pell Farm using \$1.2 million bond.
- Acquisition and stewardship of 200 acre Hassanamesit Woods, including archeology and ecological analysis. A \$500,000 bond has been paid off.
- Rehabilitation of playing fields at Grafton Lions Club Dauphinais Park.

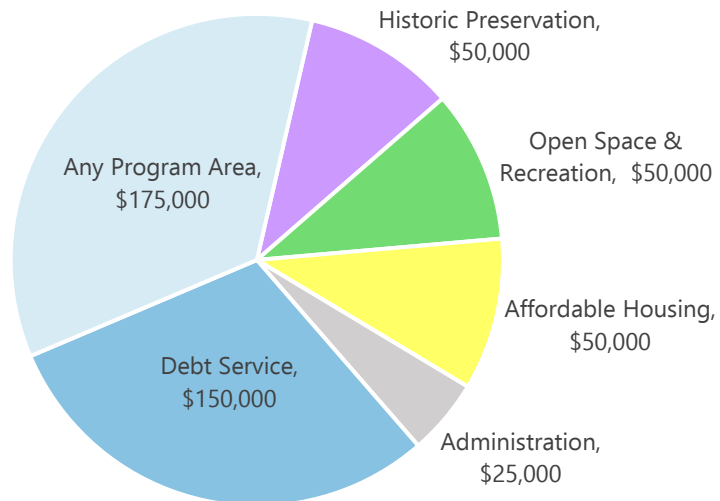


Projected Available Revenues

In FY 2021 Grafton anticipates generating close to \$500,000 in local CPA revenue. The stream of local revenue can be expected to remain at this level over the next five years, growing incrementally each year. However, it is not possible at this time to project the impact of the current economic crisis on local tax revenue collection and on the volume of transactions generating fee revenue to the state's CPA Trust Fund. By order of magnitude, an estimated \$500,000 may be projected as the annual funding availability over the next five years.

The CPA requires that communities spend, or set aside for future spending, a minimum of 10% of annual CPA receipts for: open space and recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70% of funds may be allocated to any eligible Community Preservation uses at the discretion of the CPC and subject to the approval of Town Meeting. However, CPA funds cannot be spent on maintenance or used to supplant funds being used for existing community preservation purposes. Up to 5% of annual revenues can be spent on administrative and operating expenses of the Community Preservation Committee. As of 2020 annual payments on the two CPA projects with outstanding bonds require approximately \$150,000 each year, leaving approximately \$175,000 available funds that may be used in any CPA program area. Figure 3 illustrates how the order-of-magnitude estimate of funds is divided allocated among the spending categories.

Figure 3: Estimated Annual Funding Availability
(Order of Magnitude)



Section 2: Community Context and Resources

Grafton is a predominantly suburban town located in east central Massachusetts, roughly 5 miles southeast of Worcester and 30 miles west of Boston. The town is bordered by Shrewsbury, Westborough, Upton, Northbridge, Sutton, Millbury, and touches Worcester. The Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) passes through Grafton, with the closest exchange located just west of the town in Millbury. Other major transportation routes include north/south Routes 122 and 140, Route 30 (east/west through North Grafton), and Route 122A (east/west through South Grafton). Grafton is also served by the MBTA commuter rail, with a stop located in North Grafton.

There are three sections of town, North Grafton, Grafton Center, and South Grafton, each with a distinct character resulting from their respective natural resources, history, and more recent land use patterns. More densely developed areas are concentrated in the central and southern portions of the town (along the Quinsigamond and Blackstone rivers), while the eastern and western sides of the town have more rural character with protected open space and agriculture.



Grafton Commuter Rail Station



Mill village housing, 2nd Street in North Grafton



Home under construction, Merriam Road in eastern side/Grafton Center

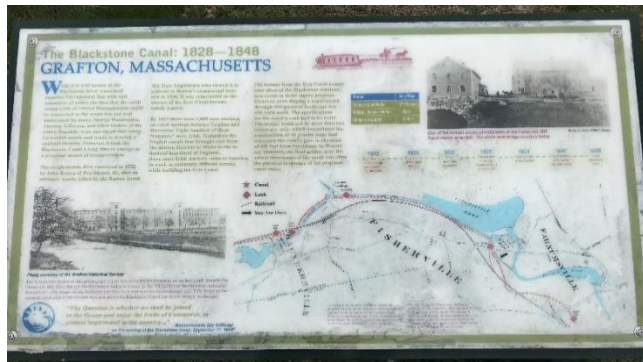


Fisherville, South Grafton

Historic Overview

With lush meadows, good farmlands, and abundant waterways, Grafton has historically been a site of settlement – by Native Nipmuc prior to European colonization. Originally called Hassanamesit, it became the third of Reverend John Elliot's "Praying Indian" towns and served as a center for missionary activities in Central Massachusetts. Although the Nipmuc community was dispersed during King Philip's War, and most of their land later sold and divided, a segment of the original Hassanamisco Plantation (Cisco Homestead) remains in Nipmuc tribal ownership, and is the only piece of land in Massachusetts held continuously in Native American hands.

Incorporated in 1735, the town began primarily as a farming community, characterized by prosperous, dispersed agricultural settlements. Access to waterpower from the Blackstone and Quinsigamond Rivers catapulted the town into the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century, spurring the development of mill villages in North Grafton and South Grafton in addition to the settlement in Grafton's center. To ease



Interpretive Marker, Blackstone Canal at Mill Villages Park

transportation between Worcester and Providence, the Blackstone Canal was constructed alongside the Blackstone River, and then quickly supplanted by railroads. In addition to manufacturing, the farm economy also benefited from the railroads, supporting dairy production and fruit orchards. Strong historic villages still characterize the town's development pattern, including Fisherville, Farnumsville, Saundersville, New England Village and Grafton Center.

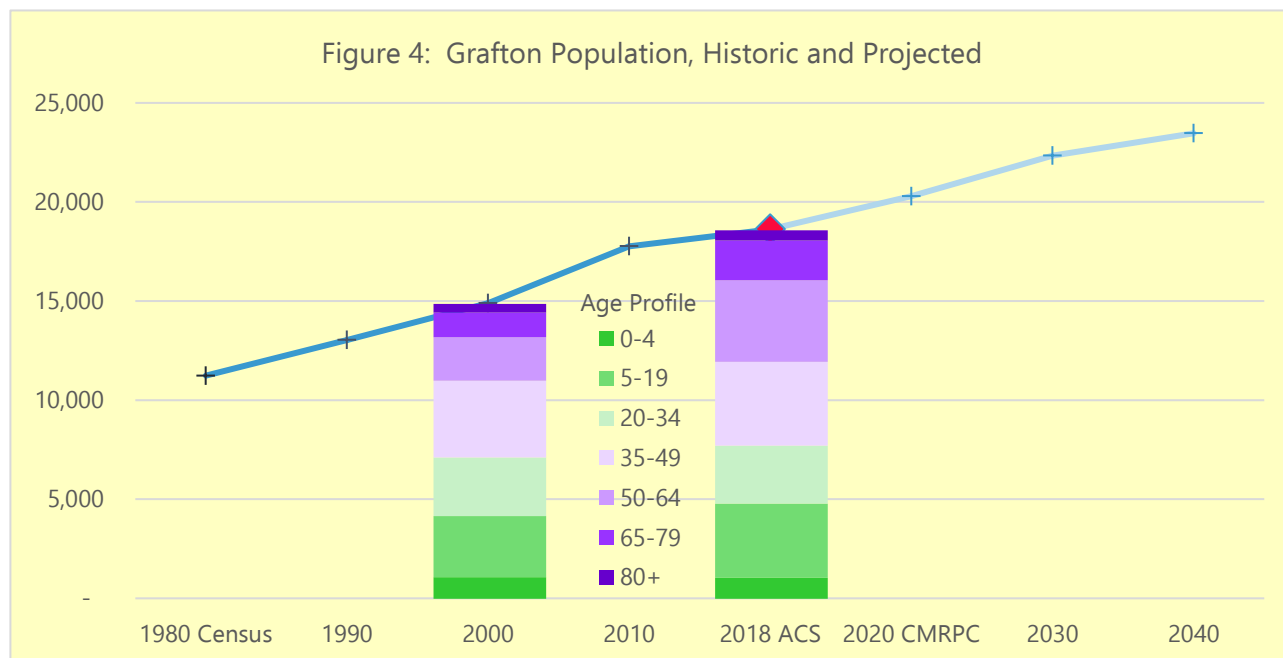
Another significant legacy that has shaped the community was the establishment of Grafton State Hospital in 1901, occupying about 700 acres which the state purchased from families in North Grafton and Shrewsbury. Closed in 1973, the former Grafton State Hospital grounds have been divided and repurposed, primarily for a variety of institutional and industrial park uses, including the Tufts Veterinary School campus, Department of Youth Services, Centech Park, and a commuter rail station for the MBTA.



Former State Hospital Building, Tufts University Veterinary School

Manufacturing continued to prosper until the early 20th century, but few mills were able to make a comeback after the Great Depression, and the mill-based economy declined. After World War II the town increasingly developed as a suburban community, initially dependent on its proximity to Worcester, and then to the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90), and Interstate 495. In the late 20th century and early 2000s, Grafton was one of the fastest-growing communities in the state, increasing in population by 66 percent between 1980 and 2018. The attraction of Grafton's convenient transportation access, commercial growth opportunities, and population pressures from the continuing westward expansion of the Greater Boston metropolitan area have driven a surge of development that threatens to change Grafton's small town character.

Demographic Profile



As of 2018, Grafton's population was estimated to be just under 19,000, with nearly 7,000 households. (ACS 2014-2018)³ While population growth continues, the rate has slowed after a growth spurt between 1980 and 2010. The rate of growth since 2010 has fallen short of projections prepared by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. Between 2000 and 2018 the largest growth has occurred among adults ages 35 through 79, as well as school-aged children.

<p>Families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 69% of Grafton Households 37% of households have children under age 18 School-aged population has experienced low growth since 2010, expected to continue. Median income is \$130,699 	<p>Non-families:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically roommates, unmarried couples, and living alone: 31% of Grafton households 24% of Grafton households are people living alone Median income is \$49,135
<p>Seniors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23% of Grafton households are headed by seniors over age 65, compared to 18% in 2000. Nearly half are living alone. Senior population is projected to grow fastest over the next 10 years. 28% of seniors over age 65 have a disability. Median income is \$39,237 	<p>Social Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 77% of Grafton residents are White, non-Hispanic or Latino. Largest minority populations are Asian (8%), and Hispanic or Latino, any race (7%). The southeast corner of Grafton is defined as an Environmental Justice community, having a high concentration of minority residents. 9% of Grafton residents have a disability;

³ Demographic data comes from the US Census' American Community Survey (ACS), which annually collects data from a sample of the Town's population. For purposes of accuracy local area surveys are aggregated over five years.

Demographic Comparison Data

- Grafton households have a higher median household income relative to Worcester County and the state.
- Compared to the region, a higher share of Grafton households are families, while Grafton has fewer individuals living alone.
- The share of Grafton households with people over age 60 has increased in the past decade.

Table 2: Household Composition

	Average Household Size	Families	Nonfamily Households	Individuals Living Alone	With Children under 18	With Seniors over 60	Median Household Income
Grafton (2018)	2.64	69%	31%	24%	37%	38%	\$102,737
Worcester County	2.58	66%	34%	27%	31%	39%	\$71,895
Massachusetts	2.53	63%	37%	29%	29%	40%	\$77,378
Grafton (2010)	2.7	70%	30%	23%	38%	27%	\$91,743

Source: ACS 2014-2018

- The median income for senior-headed households is comparatively low.
- Grafton has very few young adult households.
- Renters comprise ¼ of Grafton households but half of households with incomes below \$50,000.
- Over 3/4 of renters are 1-2 person households, compared with less than half of homeowners.
- Younger adults and non-family households are more likely to be renters, while homeowners are most likely to be middle-aged families.
- At the same time, one in five renter households has children under age 18, and nearly half of renter households are middle-aged adults.

Table 3: Household Income by Age of Householder

Grafton				Worcester County	
	Households	%	Median Income	Households	Median Income
15 to 24 years	14	0%	-	2%	\$35,612
25 to 44 years	2,186	31%	\$118,558	30%	\$79,406
45 to 64 years	3,172	45%	\$124,684	43%	\$92,379
65 years & over	1,614	23%	\$39,237	24%	\$41,262

Source: ACS 2014-2018

Table 4: Characteristics of Homeowner and Renter Households

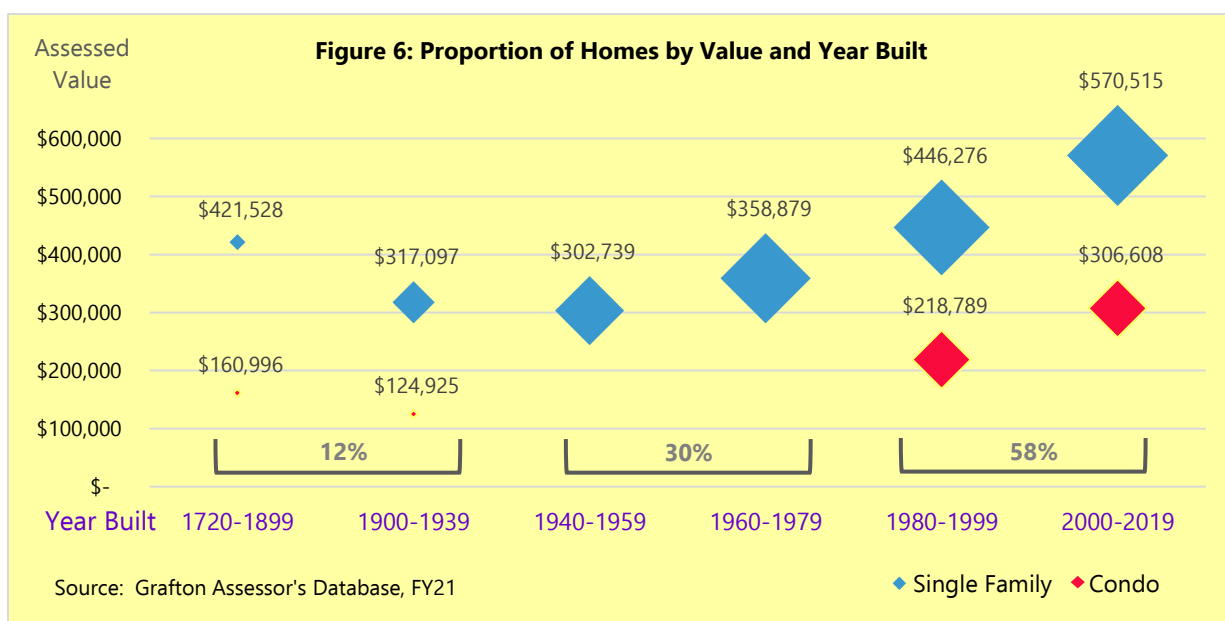
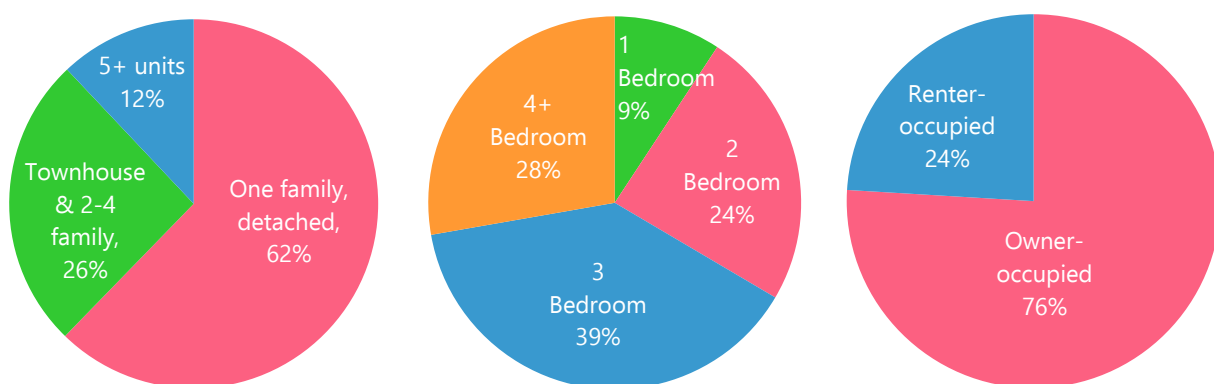
	Owner	Renter	Renters as % of all Households
Grafton Households	5,306	1,680	24%
Less than \$50,000	16%	50%	49%
\$50,000-\$99,999	20%	36%	36%
\$100,000 or more	64%	14%	7%
1-2 person households	48%	76%	33%
3 or more persons	52%	24%	13%
Householder under age 35	9%	30%	50%
Householder age 35-64	71%	48%	18%
Householder age 65 and older	20%	22%	26%
Family Households	81%	39%	13%
Families with children	43%	21%	13%
Nonfamily households	19%	61%	51%

Source: ACS 2014-2018

Housing Inventory and Market Conditions

- As the town experienced a significant construction boom in the last decades of the 20th century, half of Grafton's housing inventory is single family homes and condominiums constructed between 1980 and 2010.
- Grafton's homes are predominantly large, single family, and owner-occupied. More diverse housing types, including small-scale multifamily and mixed use structures were primarily built in the early 20th century; the majority of larger multifamily buildings mostly date to the 1970's.
- The average sales price in 2019 was \$387,000 for single family homes and \$281,000 for condominiums. Average values vary by era of construction, as newer homes tend to be increasingly large and expensive.
- ACS estimates that 72 percent of households with incomes below \$50,000 are cost-burdened, i.e., spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. These include the majority of Grafton's seniors and non-family households.

Figure 5: Characteristics of Grafton Housing Inventory (ACS 2014-2018)



Housing Comparison Data

- As home construction accelerated in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, homes became increasingly large and expensive.
- Grafton's older housing stock includes more diverse housing styles such as small-scale multifamily and mixed use buildings.

Table 5: Housing Inventory Characteristics

Use/Year Built	Properties	Average Lot Size (Acres)	Average Value	Average Living Area (s.f.)
Single-family	4,510	1.02	\$418,907	2,042
1720-1939	291	1.47	\$398,004	2,195
1940-1979	1,753	0.90	\$334,348	1,505
1980-1999	1,037	1.11	\$446,276	2,147
2000-2019	1,084	1.07	\$570,515	2,913
Condominiums	1,322		\$260,713	1,447
1720-1939	40		\$146,568	982
1980-1999	618		\$218,789	1,204
2000-2019	664		\$306,608	1,701
Other Residential		Properties	Average Year Built	
Two-Family or Duplex		237	1920	
Small Multifamily (3-8 units)		115	1911	
Large Multifamily		19	1969	
Mixed Use		95	1929	
Multiple Houses on Single Lot		19	1917	
Mobile Homes		4	1964	
Institutional/Housing Authority		10	1967	

Source: Town of Grafton Assessor's Database, FY2020

Table 6. Regional Context, Housing Inventory

	Housing Units	Average Units per Acre	Median Home Value	% Rental	% Detached Single-family	% built After 1980
Shrewsbury	14,207	1.07	\$398,000	26%	64%	39%
Westborough	7,447	0.57	\$449,600	38%	51%	43%
Upton	2,852	0.21	\$440,800	15%	82%	54%
Northbridge	6,491	0.59	\$300,200	37%	52%	45%
Sutton	3,636	0.18	\$350,700	6%	87%	47%
Millbury	5,668	0.56	\$278,700	27%	61%	34%
Grafton	7,261	0.50	\$354,000	24%	62%	50%

Source: ACS 2014-2018

- Grafton has moderate home prices, density, and diversity compared with neighboring towns. A relatively high share of housing is recently built.

Table 7: Housing Cost Burden

	Cost-Burdened Households	% of all Households	% Cost Burdened
Renters	662	24%	39%
Homeowners	1,192	76%	22%
Household Income			
Less than \$50,000	1,162	25%	68%
\$50,000-\$75,000	369	14%	38%
More than \$75,000	323	62%	8%
Age of Householder			
Under 35 years	240	14%	25%
35-64 years	970	63%	22%
65+ years	644	23%	40%
Total	1,854		27%

Source: ACS 2014-2018

- 1,854 households in Grafton are considered to be housing cost burdened, paying more than 30% of their income on housing.
- Renters, low income households, and senior-headed households are disproportionately burdened by housing affordability.

Community Assets



Quinsigamond River at Eckblaw Landing



Blackstone River at Mill Villages Park

Natural Resources

Surface waters form an important element of Grafton's natural landscape, as well as its historic development pattern.

- The **Quinsigamond River**, running southward through North Grafton and Center sections of town, and **Blackstone River** running southeastward through South Grafton fueled the town's hydropowered industry in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
 - The town is also crossed by several brooks, including **Miscoe Brook** on the eastern side, **Cronin Brook** to the west, and **Axtell Brook** in North Grafton.
 - Prominent water bodies include **Lake Ripple**, **Flint Pond**, and **Hovey Pond** in North Grafton, **Fisherville Pond** in South Grafton, and **Silver Lake** on the southeast side. Some of these and several smaller ponds are man-made, created by former mill dams.
 - Grafton's water bodies have historically been polluted due to industrial operations. Conditions have significantly improved, but toxic river and pond sediments remain.
 - Significant wetland areas include **Great Meadows** located along Miscoe Brook, **Fisherville Marshes** located at confluence of Quinsigamond and Blackstone Rivers, and the **Quinsigamond Marsh** in North Grafton.
- River corridors, marshes, vernal pools, wetlands, and upland forests contribute critical wildlife habitats, including some areas identified by MassWildlife Natural Heritage & Endangered Species (NHESP) as **Priority Habitats of Rare Species**. The Miscoe Brook corridor encompassing the southeastern side of Grafton lies within an **Area of Critical Environmental Concern** (ACEC).
 - Drinking water is provided by two public water districts (Grafton and South Grafton) that together cover most of the town. Residents in outlying parts of town rely on private wells.

Conservation Land

Grafton has over 3,000 acres of open space, under varying ownership and with varying levels of protection.

- **Town-owned:** According to the 2020 OSRP, the Town holds 62 properties for conservation purposes, totaling over 1,400 acres. Major sites include Pell Farm, Great Meadows, Hennessey and Webber properties, Oakmont Farms, and Axtell Forest.
- **State-owned:** The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game own 99 acres, including North Grafton Wildlife Management Area and an area along the Quinsigamond River. (OSRP)
- **Grafton Land Trust** – Grafton Land Trust owns or holds Conservation Restrictions on close to 600 acres. Major holdings include Brigham Hill Preserve, lands surrounding Lake Ripple, and Parker and Salisbury Preserves in the southeast section of town. (OSRP)
- **Tufts University:** Tufts University owns 493 acres that were formerly part of the Grafton State Hospital campus. (Grafton Assessor's Database, 2020) Beyond a cluster of buildings along Westboro Road that form the core of the Veterinary School campus, the majority of Tufts' property is open space which is not permanently protected (and not included in the open space counted in the OSRP), but is not likely to be further developed. Some of Tufts' land is actively used for horses and livestock, and some as hay fields and forest.
- **Other Public and Conservation Properties:** Grafton's water districts own 76 acres for drinking water protection. In addition, other land trusts and conservation-minded organizations own approximately 70 acres. (Assessor) There may be additional privately-owned land held under conservation or agricultural preservation restrictions.
- **Chapter 61:** Currently Grafton has a total of 824 acres of privately-owned land that is assessed under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B. Properties participating in this program pay reduced property taxes as long as they remain in farm, forest, or recreational use. These properties are not permanently protected. Should the owners withdraw from the Chapter 61 program, the Town may exercise or assign a right of first refusal to purchase the properties.



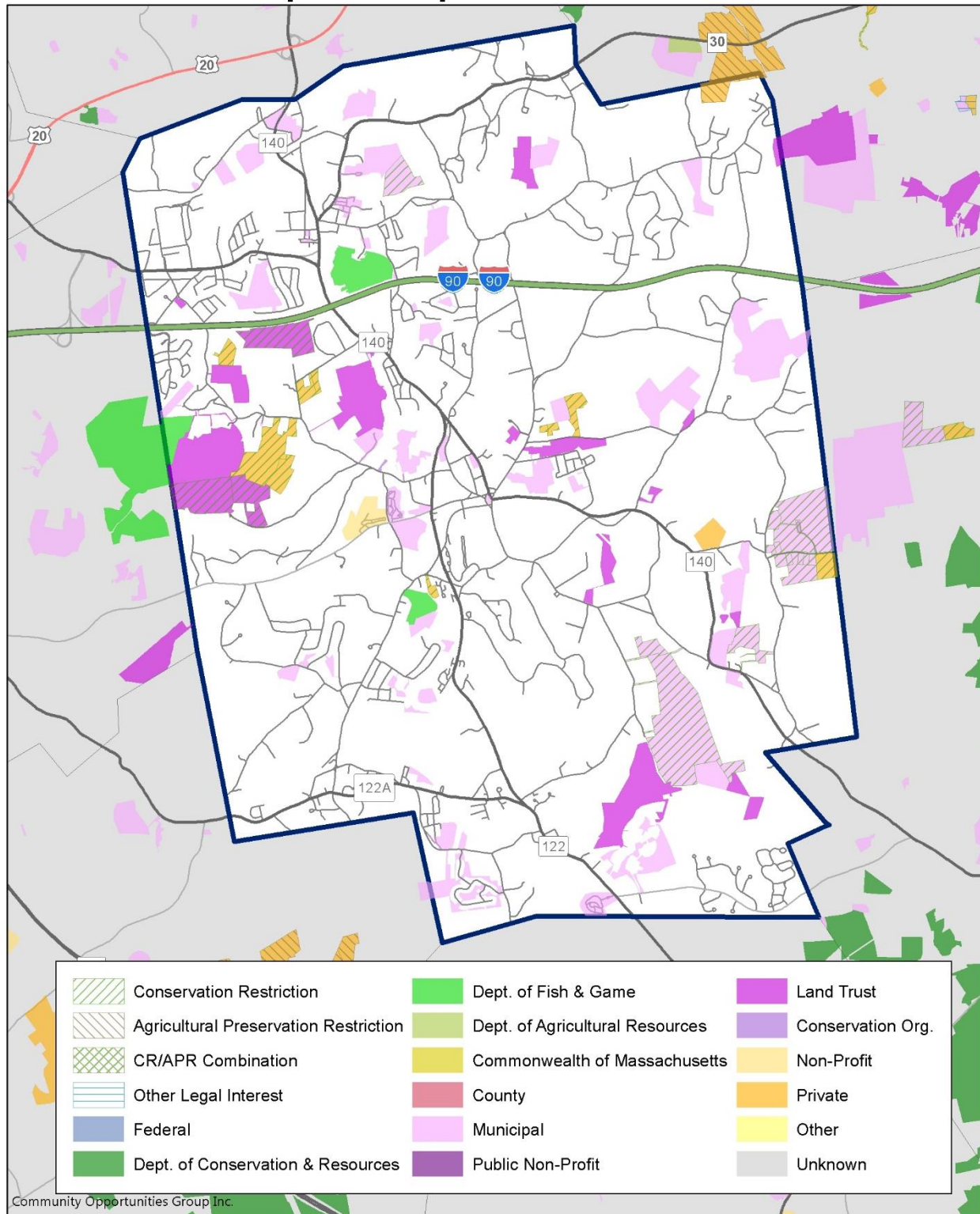
Merriam Road Conservation Area, Town of Grafton



Pasture at Tufts University

Map 1

Grafton Open Space Resources



Recreation Facilities

- **Playgrounds:** The following locations include a variety of play structures: Airport Park, Perry Hill Park, Nelson Park, and North Grafton Elementary School in North Grafton. Norcross Park, North Street Elementary School, and Millbury Street School in Center Section. Fisher/Ferry Street Park, Riverview Park, and South Grafton Elementary School in South Grafton.
- **Athletic Fields and Courts:** A combination of outdoor sports facilities including fields for soccer, football, baseball, or other ball sports, as well as basketball and tennis are located at the same sites as playgrounds listed above. Additional athletic fields are found at Riverview Park, Brookmeadow Park (South Grafton), Grafton Lions Club/Dauphinais Memorial Park, and Grafton High School (Center Section).
- **Mill Villages Park:** Offers picnic pavilion and walking paths, featuring remnants of historic structures and industrial infrastructure
- **Water-Based Recreation:** Public canoe and kayak launches are located along the Quinsigamond River at Ekblaw Landing and Riverview Park, and Lake Ripple Conservation Area. Silver Lake Beach offers swimming and kayak rentals.
- **Hiking:** Approximately 75 miles of trails are maintained on conservation land owned by the Town of Grafton, Grafton Land Trust (GLT), and other entities. GLT provides printable and online maps of trails.



Ferry Street Park



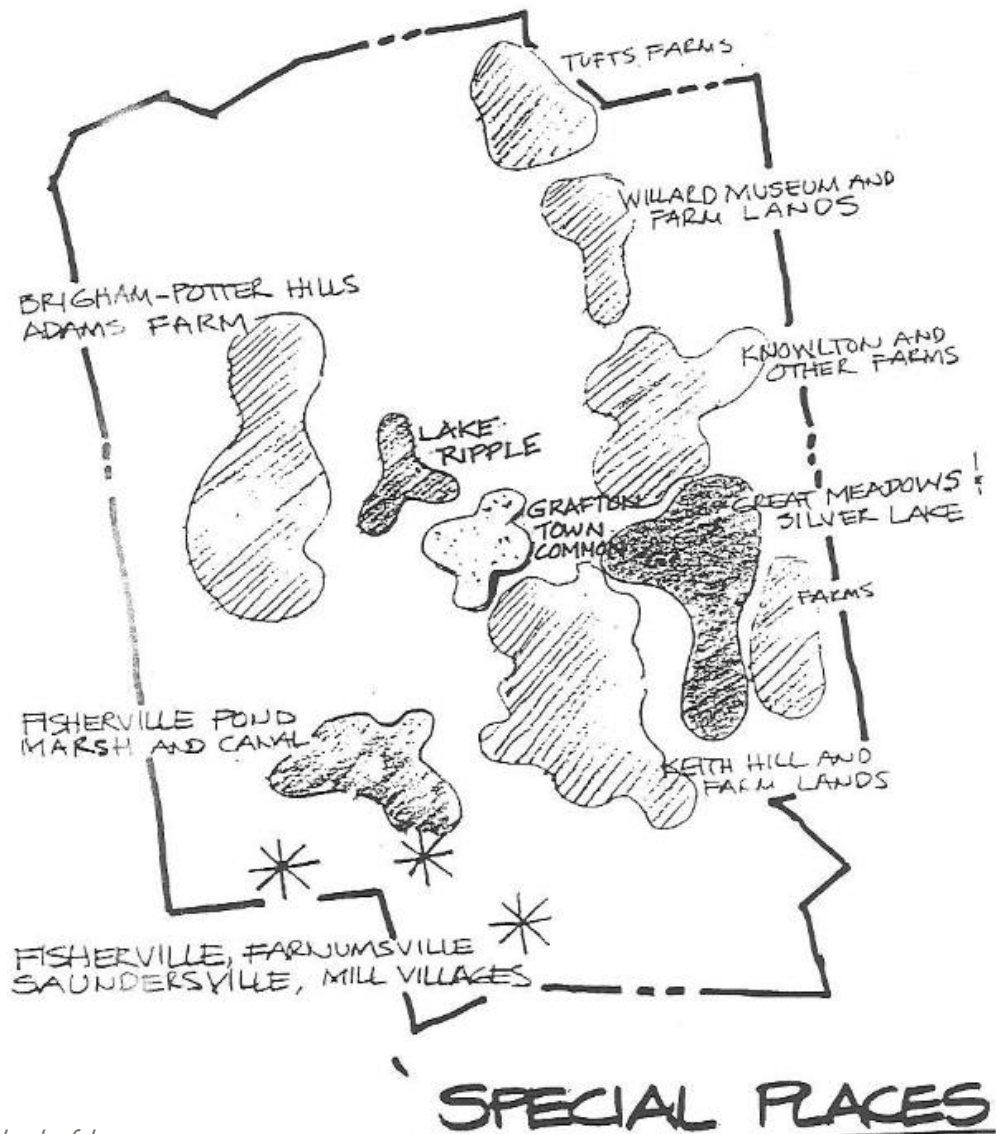
Mill Villages Park

Conservation Partners

- **Grafton Conservation Commission:** Manages Town-owned property for conservation purposes, and administers and enforces the Town's environmental regulations.
- **Grafton Land Trust:** Protects and advocates for open space in the town of Grafton, accepts and holds Conservation Restrictions, and provides programs, education, and collaboration.

Recreation Partners

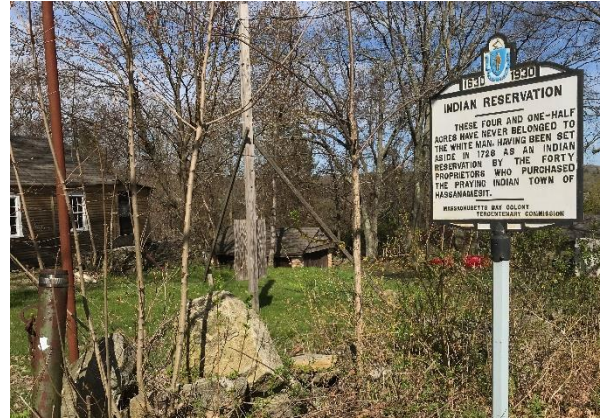
- **Recreation Department:** Coordinates activities and programs for all ages, utilizing the town's parks and various indoor facilities.
- **Lions Club:** Owns and coordinates the use of athletic facilities at Grafton Lions Club Dauphinais Park.
- **Grafton Public Schools:** Responsible for playgrounds and athletic fields and coordinates youth sports.
- **Tufts University:** Maintains Farm Field for registered dog walking at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine.
- **Nonprofit Groups/Leagues:** Organize individual sports for youth and adults, including softball/baseball, cricket, lacrosse, football, cheer, and soccer.



Walt Cudnohovsky
2001 Master Plan

Historic Sites

- **Grafton Common Historic District:** A total of 16 buildings and 3 parcels without buildings comprise Grafton's only Local Historic District.
- **Listed Historic Assets:** Grafton has 4 districts and 5 properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, numerous assets are listed on the State Register, dating from the early 1700's through the 20th century. See Map 2.
- **Museums:** Three nonprofit organizations operate museums in Grafton which feature historic buildings and artifacts, including the Willard House and Clock Museum, the State Police Museum and Learning Center, and the Grafton Historical Society. The Cisco Homestead, or Hassanamisco Reservation, is a 3-acre property that has been in continuous Native ownership since colonial settlement, now headquarters of the Nipmuc Nation.
- **Mill Villages:** Several historic neighborhoods have characteristic patterns of residential and mixed use neighborhoods surrounding the site of a historic mill complex, including Fisherville, Farnumsville, and Saundersville along the Blackstone River, as well as New England Village/Upper & Lower Mills on the Quinsigamond River in North Grafton.
 - Fisherville Mill burned down in 1999, leaving an industrial brownfield which has been heavily remediated and planned for redevelopment. A portion of the site has been transformed into Mill Villages Park.
 - Mills still in existence include Wuskanut Mill complex (Farnumsville), and Washington Mill (North Grafton).
- **Industrial Heritage:** Structures and artifacts associated with historic transportation and industrial heritage are located throughout the town, particularly along the Blackstone and Quinsigamond Rivers.



Cisco Homestead



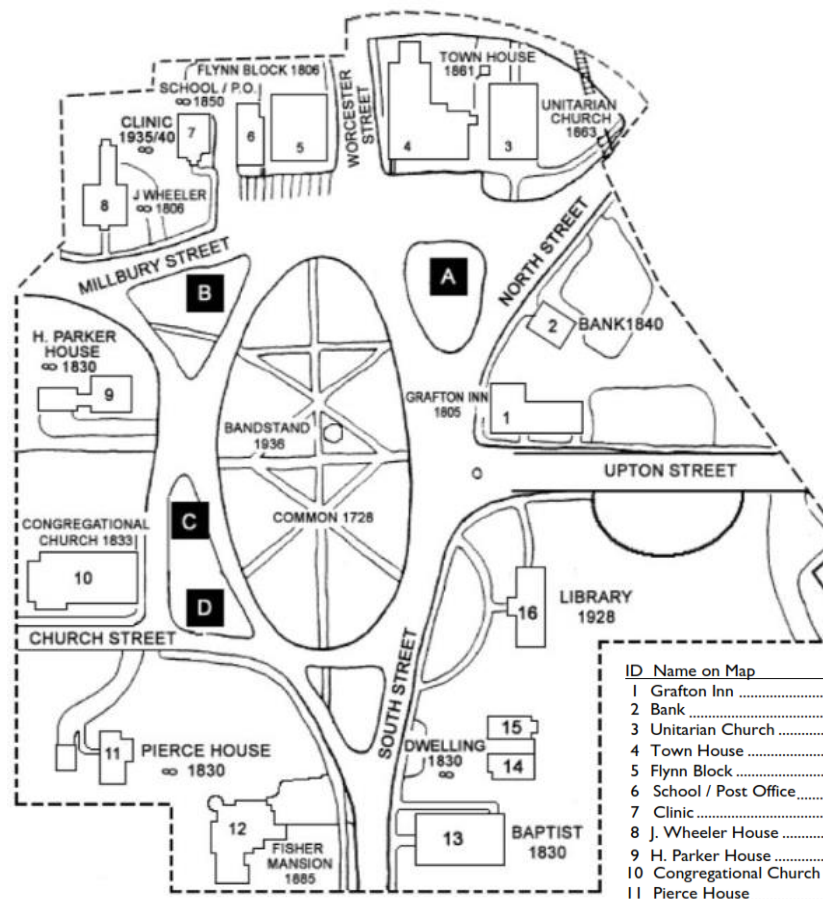
Willard House and Clock Museum



Wuskanut Mill, Farnumsville

- The **Blackstone Canal Historic District**, listed on the National Register, includes Grafton as it extends from Worcester to the RI border. Some Grafton segments of the canal and tow path are well preserved. (Blackstone Canal Preservation Study, 2005)
- **Grafton State Hospital:** Established in 1901, the Grafton State Hospital property comprised 700 acres straddling North Grafton, Westborough, and Shrewsbury. The campus of Tufts University occupies the majority of former GSH grounds and buildings. Portions of hospital grounds are occupied by US Jobs Corps, Department of Youth Services, the Grafton MBTA station, Centech Park, and Grafton Science Park. Surviving buildings that make up the former Grafton State Hospital are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (North Grafton Transit Village Report, 2017)
- **Scenic Resources:** A list of scenic roads are protected under Grafton's local Scenic Road Bylaw. Agricultural properties, particularly on the eastern side of Grafton, have also been identified as priority heritage landscapes. (Grafton Reconnaissance Report, 2007)

Grafton Common Historic District



ID	Name on Map	Circa	Address
1	Grafton Inn	1805	25 Grafton Common
2	Bank	1840	21 Grafton Common
3	Unitarian Church	1863	3 Grafton Common
4	Town House	1862	1 Grafton Common
5	Flynn Block	1806	8 Grafton Common
6	School / Post Office	1850	10 Grafton Common
7	Clinic	1935	12 Grafton Common
8	J. Wheeler House	1806	2 Oak Street
9	H. Parker House	1830	9 Grafton Common
10	Congregational Church	1833	30 Grafton Common
11	Pierce House	1830	1 Church Street
12	Fisher Mansion	1885	2 South Street
13	Baptist Church	1830	1 South Street
14	Dwelling	1830	39 Grafton Common
15	Dwelling	1830	37 Grafton Common
16	Library	1928	35 Grafton Common

Not Shown on Map:

Town of Grafton Properties.....4 & 6 Upton Street
Grafton & Upton Railroad.....8 Upton Street

War Memorials (maintained by the Trustees of Soldiers and Sailors Memorials)

A—Civil War B—World War I C—World War II D—Korean and Vietnam

Historic Open Space Resources



Grafton Town Common



Old Oak Street Burial Grounds



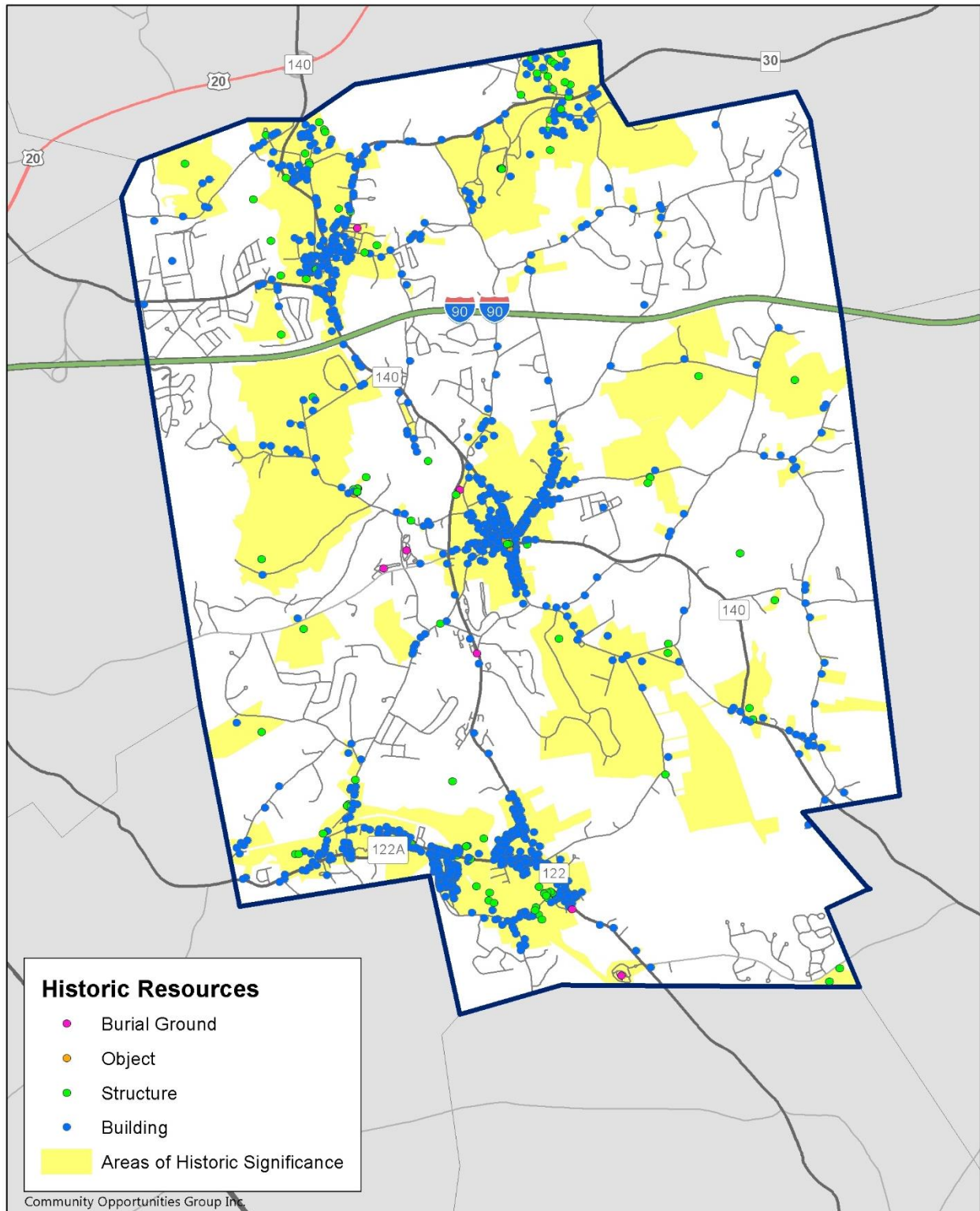
Historic Marker on George Hill Road

Grafton has several open space resources that are of special historic significance.

- **Blackstone Canal:** Remnants remain of the 3.1 miles of the Blackstone Canal passing through the mill villages in South Grafton, parallel to the Blackstone River. Completed in 1828, it served as a primary transportation corridor for movement of agricultural products, raw materials, and manufactured goods between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA, until it was closed in 1846, replaced by railroads. Portions of the canal are still extant, as well as remnants of locks and tow paths.
- **Town Common:** Laid out in 1728, Grafton Town Common is the heart of a historic district located in the center section of town. Surrounded by mid-19th century historic buildings, it was fenced and trees planted in 1845, and a bandstand constructed in 1935 for the filming of *Ah, Wilderness!* (MGM, 1935).
- **Cemeteries:** Examples of historic cemeteries in Grafton include Old Oak Street Burial Grounds, Old Farnumsville Cemetery, and the Nipmuc Indian Burial Ground.
- **Archeological Sites:** The Hassanamesit Woods Conservation Area has regional and national significance, as the site of colonial era Praying Indian Village, acquired by the Town in 2004 with CPA funds. Research at the site has provided details of Nipmuc life during the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as earlier indigenous occupations.

Map 2

Grafton Historic Resources



Organizational Capacity and Partners

- **Historical Commission:** Advocates for preservation, protection, and development of historical and architectural assets, conducting research, coordination, and educational initiatives.
- **Historic District Commission:** Under M.G.L. c. 40C, responsible for administering the provisions of Grafton's Local Historic District, the Grafton Common Historic District, which provides regulatory protection with respect to the architectural and historical integrity of buildings within the district.
- **Mill Villages Committee:** Assists the Town in identifying, prioritizing, and supporting projects and programs that enhance the physical, historical, and environmental qualities, as well as economic development opportunities within the town's historic mill villages.
- **Historical Society:** Nonprofit volunteer organization that collects, preserves, and interprets objects related to the history of Grafton. Maintains archives and offers educational programs at its museum located in the former library building of South Grafton.
- **Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission:** Encompasses 25 communities stretching from Worcester, MA to Providence, RI along the Blackstone River and its tributaries. Works in partnership with federal, state, and local agencies and non-profit and private organizations to preserve the historic and environmental elements of the Valley's landscape, and to coordinate and advocate for investment in the Valley's historic mill villages. Spearheading plans to protect resources along the Blackstone River and Blackstone Canal such as parks, trails, and interpretive sites.

Affordable Housing

Under Chapter 40B, towns are required to have at least 10 percent of their housing units be affordable to low and moderate income households. Communities that do not meet this threshold may be compelled to grant waivers known as Comprehensive Permits to developments that do not meet local land use regulations if they include at least 25 percent affordable units. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains a list of affordable units eligible to be counted toward towns' affordable housing goals, known as the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). To be eligible for the SHI, housing units must have a long term deed restriction ensuring that they will be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of Area Median Income, and be sold or rented through a Fair Housing Marketing Plan.

As of March, 2020, Grafton has a total of 379 units listed on its SHI (5.29 percent of its 2010 housing units), including 264 rental units and 115 homeownership units. 242 of Grafton's affordable rental units are reserved for seniors or people with disabilities, while there are 22 affordable rental units for families. None of the homeownership units are age-restricted.

The 2018 Housing Production Plan (2018) identifies 509-645 potential units which had either been permitted or allowed through zoning but have not yet been developed. These include units that could be built in districts zoned for mixed income development under Chapter 40R in the North Grafton Transit Village 40R Overlay District or Fisherville Smart Growth Overlay District.

Affordable Housing Inventory



Veteran's Circle, Grafton Housing Authority

- 170 units owned by the Grafton Housing Authority (GHA)
- 46 group home units licensed by the Departments of Mental Health or Developmental Services. Some of these units are administered by GHA.
- 48 units for seniors at Green Acres owned by Grafton Housing Associates, Inc., and administered by HUD.
- 113 homeownership units created using Comprehensive Permits.
- 2 homeownership units created through local initiative (LIP).

Local Organizational Capacity

- **Affordable Housing Trust:** Aims to foster the creation of affordable housing, preserve existing affordable housing, address community housing needs, and nurture community understanding of housing needs and support for local initiatives. The Trust prepared an Action Plan in 2017 to guide housing actions through 2021. The Trust currently has funds of approximately \$1.65 million, raised through a combination of CPA and a development settlement.
- **Housing Authority:** Owns and manages affordable housing units for senior/disabled residents and families at five sites throughout the town.
- **Town staff:** – The Planning Department coordinates strategic planning efforts and implementation initiatives, and oversees the permitting process for development projects, including affordable housing. In addition, the Council on Aging, Veteran's Agent, and Assessor administer or refer residents to programs to assist them in addressing housing affordability.

Regional Nonprofit Partners

- **Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc. (SMOC)** – Community action agency, provides housing and community services, including rental assistance programs, loan programs for home modifications, and fuel assistance. A subsidiary non-profit development organization, South Middlesex Non-Profit Housing Corporation, develops and manages affordable housing throughout the region.
- **Habitat for Humanity, Metro West/Greater Worcester** – Nonprofit organization affiliate based in Framingham, seeks to construct or rehabilitate houses that are sold without profit and interest to low income families.
- **RCAP Solutions** – Serves as regional housing agency, providing housing and community services to low and moderate income households, including rental assistance programs, first-time homebuyer education, downpayment assistance, lead abatement assistance, and foreclosure prevention. The organization also has an inventory of affordable housing developments and pursues development opportunities.
- **Neighborhood Of Affordable Housing (NOAH)** – Pursues development opportunities to create affordable housing throughout eastern and central Massachusetts.

Section 3: Funding Criteria

Grafton's Community Preservation Act Funds must be used for projects that serve a public purpose and meet the minimum project eligibility requirements as defined in M.G.L. c. 44B. The Committee has further established goals and priorities, articulating principles to guide the allocation of community preservation funds, providing a basis for evaluating the merit of eligible grant applications. Should requests be received which exceed the available amount of funding, the CPC will use these goals and priorities and selection criteria (provided in Appendix 3, CPA Project Application Instructions) to prioritize projects.

Goals and Priorities for each program area emerged from the needs analysis and public input gathered in the forums and survey. While these priorities serve as a guide, the specific objective or timing of funding proposals may be driven by factors such as time-sensitive opportunities, predevelopment requirements, and the scale of funding availability. The Committee has discretion to consider the characteristics of individual proposals that are deemed to be eligible for funding. Proponents are encouraged to apply with eligible projects, even if they do not match all of the overall or area-specific priorities described in this plan.

Project Eligibility

The following table summarizes the uses allowed within each program area. A more detailed matrix of allowed uses is provided in the CPA Project Application Instructions.

Table 8: Summary of Project Eligibility Criteria				
Project Type	Open Space	Recreation	Historic	Housing
Acquire	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Create	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Preserve	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support	No	No	No	Yes
Rehabilitate and/or Restore	Yes – if acquired or created with CPA Funds	Yes	Yes	Yes – if acquired or created with CPA Funds

Source: Community Preservation Coalition

M.G.L. c. 44B defines the activities and resources that are eligible for CPA funding. Projects funded with CPA should demonstrate adherence to these definitions. Alternative funding sources should be sought for activities which do not meet these criteria.

ACQUISITION: Obtain property interest by gift, purchase, devise, grant, rental, rental purchase, lease or otherwise. Only includes eminent domain taking as provided by G.L. c. 44B. Resources that are acquired using CPA funds must be protected with a permanent deed restriction that ensures they will continue to be used for the purpose for which they were acquired.

CREATION: To bring into being or cause to exist.

PRESERVATION: Protect personal or real property from injury, harm or destruction

SUPPORT: Provide grants, loans, rental assistance, security deposits, interest-rate write downs or other forms of assistance directly to individuals and families who are eligible for community housing, or to entity that owns, operates or manages such housing, for the purpose of making housing affordable

REHABILITATION AND RESTORATION: Make capital improvements, or extraordinary repairs to make assets functional for intended use, including improvements to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other federal, state or local building or access codes. With respect to historic resources, "rehabilitation" shall comply with the Standards for Rehabilitation stated in the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

OPEN SPACE: Land to protect existing and future well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, watershed land, agricultural land, grasslands, fields, forest land, fresh water marshes and other wetlands, ocean, river, stream, lake and pond frontage, lands to protect scenic vistas, land for wildlife or nature preserve and land for recreational use.

RECREATIONAL LAND: active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails, and noncommercial youth and adult sports, and the use of land as a park, playground or athletic field. "Recreational use" shall not include the use of land for a stadium, gymnasium, or similar structure, nor the creation of artificial turf fields.

HISTORIC RESOURCES: a building, structure, vessel, real property, document, or artifact that is listed or eligible for listing on the State register of historic places or has been determined by the local historic preservation commission to be significant in the history, archeology, architecture, or culture of a community.

COMMUNITY HOUSING: low and moderate income housing for individuals and families, including low or moderate income senior housing.

Chapter 44B also prohibits CPA funds from being used to supplant existing funding. CPA funds may be used to expand or extend existing projects or programs beyond the capacity provided for by other finite funding sources, but it cannot be used to replace or reimburse funds previously committed from the Town budget or other sources.

Compliance with the Anti-Aid Amendment

The Anti-Aid Amendment to the Massachusetts Constitution (Mass. Const. Amend. Article 46, § 2, as amended by Article 103) generally prohibits the granting of public funds to private organizations except when the funds are used for a designated public purpose and the benefits accrue to the public. CPA funding for privately-owned resources may require the acquisition of a public interest commensurate with the amount of funding provided. For larger privately-owned projects the dedication of a permanent Preservation or Conservation Restriction or the dedication of a public use easement may be required to ensure continued public benefit. The Anti-Aid Amendment also requires limits on the types of programs that CPA funds may be used for to support affordable housing. Consultation with Town Counsel is recommended for projects that entail private organizations or individuals.

For publicly-owned assets the Anti-Aid Amendment does not require permanent or long-term restriction for projects that create, preserve, restore, or rehabilitate assets, but the CPC may nevertheless consider whether similar restrictions or requirements should be required as a condition of CPA funding in order to protect the investment for Community Preservation Act purposes.

Overall Goals and Priorities

CPC Guiding Principles

To facilitate the process of meeting its goals the CPC maintains the following Guiding Principles:

- 1) Protect Grafton's unique character, quality of life, and natural and man-made resources through town-wide planning efforts. This includes gathering data and creative input from all applicable town-sanctioned boards and entities, as well as from private citizens;
- 2) Promote the adoption of policies that encourage developers to select less consumptive land-use patterns. Encourage development and redevelopment in areas where adequate infrastructure is already available or can be upgraded without causing damage to natural resources;
- 3) Promote economic development in conjunction with the protection of natural and historic resources and the provision of housing that supports Grafton's businesses and workforce;
- 4) Encourage collaboration and partnership, leveraging CPA to raise awareness and bring together resources to address community needs.

Grafton's Vision Statement

(from the "Town of Grafton Massachusetts 2001 Comprehensive Plan," Page 18):

GRAFTON is a small town with a strong sense of community made up of historical New England villages and new neighborhoods, whose residents are its most vital asset, where pastoral landscapes are valued, where open space preservation is considered integral to our town's character, and where carefully-planned residential as well as non-residential development enhance the community's economic stability.

Overall Priorities

- Projects should be highly visible and accessible, generating broad benefits to the community.
- Projects should be consistent with other Town and regional plans, with priority given to those that are part of a coordinated, connecting vision for area improvements.
- Priority is given to projects that preserve resources that would otherwise be threatened and/or serve a currently underserved population.
- Priority is given to projects that leverage funding from other sources and/or fill a gap where other sources are not available.
- Projects should demonstrate cost-sensitivity both in the short-term use of CPA funds, and the long-term maintenance or lifespan of the resource for which the funds are used.

Open Space / Recreation

Needs and Opportunities

Grafton's critical open space and natural resources that are in need of protection include:

- Water resources: Clean drinking water; restoration and protection of surface waters, including rivers, lakes and ponds; wetlands and marshes; watershed protection.
- Historic and heritage landscapes: Historic public spaces, working agriculture, remnants of hydro-infrastructure.
- Ecological resources: Diverse wildlife habitats and connected greenways.

Opportunities for preserving these resources include:

- Land acquisition, in particular priority sites as identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan or by the Conservation Commission.
- Protection from injury, harm, or destruction through stabilization, erosion protection, invasive species removal, or the prevention of contamination.

Grafton residents will benefit from the preservation, improvement, and expansion of recreational opportunities. Examples include:

- Creation of outdoor community spaces and expansion of recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and physical abilities. Specific opportunities are identified in plans for North Grafton, South Grafton, the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), and the Town's ADA Transition Plan.
- Creation of multipurpose trails connecting local and regional amenities, providing recreational and transportation alternatives. In particular, the OSRP identifies the preservation and development of trail systems along the Quinsigamond and Blackstone Rivers to be a high priority. Specific opportunities include the Blackstone River Greenway and potential trails identified in plans for North Grafton and South Grafton.
- Rehabilitation, restoration, or preservation of *outdoor* recreational facilities such as playgrounds and athletic fields.

Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote the preservation of open spaces and natural resources including wildlife habitat, water quality and watershed protection, working farms and forests. <i>Natural resources contribute to health, resilience, quality of life, fiscal balance, and economic vitality for Grafton's residents and businesses.</i>• Expand and improve recreation facilities to serve Grafton residents of all ages and abilities. <i>Not every facility serves the needs of every resident. CPA funds should support a range of offerings so that residents have access to a variety of passive and active recreational offerings.</i>• Create connected systems of trails for walking and biking, as well as greenways to protect habitats and natural resources.
Priorities	<p>First: Protect water resources, critical habitats, and historic open space features. Improve access to recreation opportunities for all Grafton residents.</p> <p>Second: Preserve heritage landscapes and expand opportunities for active and passive recreation.</p>

Historic Preservation

Needs and Opportunities

Grafton's historic resources in need of preservation include:

- Public and institutional buildings: Buildings in active use by the Town or nonprofit organizations, as well as vacant or underutilized buildings owned by the Town or institutional entities.
- Privately-owned commercial or residential buildings that have historic significance to Grafton and contribute to the town's unique sense of place.
- Sites and structures significant to the town's history: historic cemeteries and public spaces, remnants of hydro-infrastructure, archeological sites. Examples of historic structures and buildings are identified in plans for North and South Grafton.
- Artifacts and documents significant to Grafton's history owned by the Town, nonprofit museums, or other community organizations.

Opportunities for the preservation of these resources include:

- Restoration and accessibility improvements to enable public and institutional buildings to be used for their intended purpose and to protect them from damage or loss.
- Acquisition and/or adaptive reuse of underutilized buildings for public or affordable housing purposes. Examples of opportunity sites include former mills or commercial buildings, surplus State Hospital buildings, underutilized religious or fraternal organizations, and historic multifamily or worker housing in the State Register-listed mill villages.
- Preservation and restoration of artifacts, documents, sites, and structures.

Historic Preservation Eligibility:

To be an eligible CPA Historic Preservation Project, there must be a tangible asset that is being preserved or protected, according to the definitions of eligible activities. A guide to eligibility criteria for historic preservation may be found in Appendix 4.

- *Information* is not an eligible asset. Providing for the interpretation and public access to historic resources (such as signage or digitization) may be carried out as incidental tasks associated with eligible project activities, but they cannot comprise a significant part of the scope.
- The development of inventories or plans does not meet the definition of eligible activities, unless a study is to be carried out in preparation for preserving a specific tangible asset.
- The use of CPA funds for historic preservation must adhere to the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. (See Appendix 5.)

Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preserve assets that are significant to Grafton's history and contribute to the town's unique sense of place.• Improve public access to historic assets and increase awareness of the Town's history.
Priorities	<p>First: Prevent the loss of historic buildings or other threatened assets</p> <p>Second: Create or expand community engagement with Grafton history</p> <p>Third: Preserve or enhance curb appeal of Grafton villages and neighborhoods</p>

Affordable Housing

Needs and Opportunities

To fulfill the Town's affordable housing goal under Chapter 40B, the Town should have at least 716 SHI-eligible units based on the 2010 Census. Town currently has 379 units. The 2018 Housing Production Plan projects that about 400 units will be needed after 2020 in order to meet the 10 percent minimum goal. Grafton's annual housing production target under Chapter 40B is 36 units, anticipated to increase to 39 units when the Census 2020 figures are released in 2021 or 2022.

Several concerns were articulated through the public engagement process:

- A lack of affordable housing presents an obstacle for economic development, as there is a lack of housing affordable to employees of local businesses. Workers in local businesses consistently live two towns away.
- Entry level housing is particularly challenging. People who grow up in Grafton cannot afford to live here when they move out on their own.
- People cannot afford to stay in Grafton when they retire. Senior housing is a priority need.
- Many people who have an interest in living in Grafton currently live elsewhere because they can't afford Grafton.

To support local residents and businesses, priority housing needs identified in the 2018 Housing Production Plan include:

- Affordable rental housing of all kinds
- Assistance for first-time homeowners and/or renters
- Greater handicapped accessibility and supportive services for the disabled and an increasingly aging population
- Support for lower income owners with pressing home repair problems

Grafton may also benefit from strategic funding toward affordable housing to leverage investment and to promote recovery from the COVID-19 economic crisis. Examples include:

- Supporting the Town's eligibility for the state's Housing Choice Initiative, which enables the Town to qualify for infrastructure funding and other grants.
- Providing short-term rental assistance to help people access housing they can afford and to prevent homelessness or displacement.

Eligibility:

Community housing is defined as housing for low and moderate income individuals and families. For purposes of CPA, *Moderate Income* is considered to be less than 100%, and *Low Income* is less than 80% of US HUD Area Wide Median Income. The following table illustrates income limits for CPA-funded housing, which are typically updated annually.

Low and Moderate Income Definitions (2020)

	1 person	2 person	3 person	4 person	5 person	6 person
Low Income	\$54,950	\$62,800	\$70,650	\$78,500	\$84,800	\$91,100
Moderate Income	\$68,740	\$78,560	\$88,380	\$98,200	\$106,056	\$113,912

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- For housing projects that entail mixed-income development, CPA funds can only be used to support the eligible low and moderate Income units at each stage of development. For example, CPA funds can only support half of the site acquisition costs if half of the units to be created will be market rate.
- The use of CPA funds must entail some type of affordability restriction that is commensurate with the assistance provided. Programs that provide assistance to individuals or households to make housing affordable for them must be developed carefully in compliance with the state's Anti-Aid Amendment.
- CPA is intended to support the expansion and preservation of resources to meet community housing needs. CPA funds may be used to prevent the loss of existing affordable units through expiration of subsidies or deed restrictions, or physical destruction. In most cases, existing affordable units are not eligible for rehabilitation and restoration unless they were initially created using CPA funds or deemed to be historic.

Goals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet Grafton's needs for appropriate housing options affordable to low and moderate income residents, including workforce housing. • Promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing through the adaptation of existing buildings and redevelopment sites. • Support low and moderate income households in accessing housing that they can afford such as through rental assistance or other housing programs.
Priorities	<p>First: Create or preserve SHI-eligible affordable housing units</p> <p>Second: Provide support for households to access affordable housing or prevent displacement</p> <p>Third: Create or preserve units affordable to moderate income households</p>

Summary of CPA Goals and Priorities

Overall Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects should be highly visible and accessible, generating broad benefits to the community. • Projects should be consistent with other Town and regional plans, with priority given to those that are part of a coordinated, connecting vision for area improvements. • Priority is given to projects that preserve resources that would otherwise be threatened and/or serve a currently underserved population. • Projects cannot replace funding from the Town budget or other sources. • Priority is given to projects that leverage funding from other sources and/or fill a gap where other sources are not available. • Projects should demonstrate cost-sensitivity both in the short-term use of CPA funds, and the long-term maintenance or lifespan of the resource for which the funds are used. 	
Program Areas	
Goals	Priorities
Open Space	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the preservation of open spaces and natural resources including wildlife habitat, water quality and watershed protection, working farms and forests. • Expand and improve recreation facilities to serve Grafton residents of all ages and abilities. 	<p>First: Protect water resources, critical habitats, and historic open space features. Improve access to recreation opportunities for all Grafton residents.</p> <p>Second: Preserve heritage landscapes and expand opportunities for active and passive recreation.</p>
Affordable Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet Grafton's needs for appropriate housing options affordable to low and moderate income residents. • Promote the creation and preservation of affordable housing through the adaptation of existing buildings and redevelopment sites. • Support low and moderate income households in accessing housing that they can afford. 	<p>First: Create or preserve SHI-eligible affordable housing units</p> <p>Second: Provide support for households to access affordable housing or prevent displacement</p> <p>Third: Create or preserve units affordable to moderate income households</p>
Historic Preservation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve assets that are significant to Grafton's history and contribute to the town's unique sense of place. • Improve public access to historic assets and increase awareness of the Town's history. 	<p>First: Prevent the loss of historic buildings or other threatened assets</p> <p>Second: Create or expand community engagement with Grafton History</p> <p>Third: Preserve or enhance curb appeal of Grafton villages and neighborhoods</p>

Section 4: Committee Procedures and Policies

Committee Functions

As described in the Town's CPA Bylaw, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is responsible for evaluating Grafton's community preservation needs and making recommendations for projects to be considered for approval at Town Meeting.⁴ As part of this responsibility, the Committee undertakes the following initiatives:

1. The Committee prepared a Community Preservation Plan describing the community preservation needs, possibilities and resources by consulting with various other boards and committees, Town staff, community partners, and the general public. The plan will be reviewed annually to update the projected available funds and to recognize significant changes in the needs analysis or goals and priorities. Every five years the CPC will undertake a more thorough update of the Community Preservation Plan.

An annual public hearing will take place as part of the annual update process. In addition, statutory members may obtain input on needs and priorities from their respective appointing Boards and Committees. The CPC may conduct additional outreach to obtain input from stakeholders, including Town staff, members of other boards and committees, community partners and organizations who have previously applied for CPA funds, and the general public.

2. The Committee establishes an application process by which entities may request CPA funding. The application process sets out a timeline and forms requesting information that will be helpful for the CPC to evaluate proposed funding requests, as well as criteria by which it will make its decisions. From time to time (typically during the annual review process) the CPC may refine its application timeline or forms.

The application process allows for applicants to seek funding approval twice a year, at the Annual Town Meeting in May, as well as the Semi-Annual Town Meeting which typically occurs in October. While applications may be accepted throughout the year, the application timeline reflects deadlines for CPC recommendations to be submitted to the subsequent Town Meeting.

Twice each year the CPC holds a Preapplication Workshop. Optional for grantees, the purpose of the workshop is to assist prospective proponents in understanding the overall process for obtaining CPA funds, as well as the eligibility parameters and selection criteria that the Committee uses. The workshop may entail a presentation by the CPC, and provide an opportunity for attendees to ask questions and discuss strategies for preparing a successful application. Workshops are scheduled 2-3 months before applications are due for each Town Meeting round.

Depending on the complexity of the project and the point in the annual timeline, the CPC may conduct a preliminary review of each application that is received, upon which additional information may be requested of applicants, if needed. Applicants are encouraged to provide

⁴ Article 34 of the Grafton Town Bylaws. See Appendix 2.

more time for planning and review of more complex projects. Applications and supplementary material will be posted on the CPC's website to be available for public review.

Applicants will be invited to present their projects at a CPC meeting. At the Presentation the CPC will accept public comment, and will then deliberate and vote on recommending funding for each project after the application is presented. (Applicant presentations and public input will take place at regular CPC meetings.)

Policies / Best Practices

The following are general policies or best practices that the CPC typically follows for purposes of ensuring sound fiduciary responsibility. To the extent that is compliant with State law, exceptions to these practices may be considered on a case-by-case basis for specific projects.

- The CPC aims to avoid bonding that will result in bond payments that constitute more than 50 percent of estimated local surcharge.
- CPA funds cannot be used for the same purposes to replace funding that has already been committed from another source. In the case of projects that have multiple funding sources, the CPC will determine on a case-by-case basis what the requirements will be for using CPA funds in relation to other funds.
- Projects should be completed within two years, if possible. The Committee may rescind funds for projects which have not been initiated within two years of funding approval.
- The CPC customarily transfers the minimum 10 percent Housing Reserve to the Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) each year. A higher percentage of funds may be committed to Affordable Housing upon submission of a project application by the AHT or another applicant.
- By accepting a CPA grant, the grantee agrees to follow rules established by the CPC under Chapter 44B and other applicable state laws.
- If project funding is successfully approved at Town Meeting, grant recipients will subsequently enter a Grant Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the CPC and will be required to submit regular project reports and photographs to the designated CPC representative in order to demonstrate progress toward completion of the project.

Communication

Effective communication at every stage is key to a transparent and successful CPA program. The following practices help to ensure awareness of the availability and process for obtaining CPA funds, and of the benefits that CPA has provided to the Town since its adoption in 2001.

- Inquiries and comments may be submitted to the Committee via the CPA Administrator, duncanj@graffton-ma.gov.
- Public comment or applicant questions may be brought to the CPC at any of its monthly meetings throughout the year. Twice each year the CPC holds Preapplication Workshops to provide information about the funding process and invite applicants to discuss prospective projects. Once

per year, the CPC holds a public hearing to solicit public input and feedback about community preservation needs and the application process.

Notice of hearings is posted for 14 days in accordance with M.G.L. c. 39, §23B and published in a newspaper of general circulation once in each of two successive weeks before the day of the hearing. The preapplication workshops simply require agendas to be posted 48 hours in advance, as with other public meetings. Beyond the required meeting notice, enhanced publicity for these and other critical CPC meetings, deadlines, or activities is recommended to raise awareness about CPA and to increase engagement around project recommendations. Examples of additional venues for engagement include the Town's website, cable station, social media, and newsletters or email lists.

- A Community Preservation Committee page on the Town's Website provides a clearinghouse of information about the CPC. The web page features links to documents including meeting agendas and minutes, the CPA Plan, application instructions and forms, and completed applications and materials provided by project proponents that are under consideration for CPC recommendations and Town Meeting approval. The web page also includes a photo gallery and information about projects that were previously completed or are under construction.

Record Keeping

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 44B §13, the Committee maintains an account of all of its actions, including its recommendations and the action taken on them and records of all appropriations or expenditures made from the CPA Fund. The Committee keeps records of any real property interests acquired, disposed of, or improved by the Town upon its recommendations, including the name and addresses of the grantors or grantees and the nature of the consideration. All records and accounts are public record.

Annually, in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and ordinances, the following reports are submitted to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue:

- A "Community Preservation Surcharge Report" to the Municipal Data Management/Technical Assistance Bureau. This report details surcharge commitments, abatements, and exemptions of the previous fiscal year and is required for a state trust fund distribution to be made to the community. (To be completed by Finance Department)
- A "Community Preservation Fund Report" to the Bureau of Accounts. This report details all fund activity of the previous fiscal year. A copy must also be submitted to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). (To be completed by Finance Department)
- A "Community Preservation Projects Report" to the EOEA. This report details acquisitions and other community preservation initiatives of the previous fiscal year. (To be completed by the CPC Administrator or a member of the CPC)

Task Calendar

Activities Legend: **Public or Applicant Engagement** (preparation / **deadlines or events**)
Record Keeping
Town Meeting

Monthly	As Needed	Review, prepare and sign Voucher Screens and Warrants
	As Needed	Update CPC web site
January	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for February Project Submission Deadline
	1st Monday	Prepare CPC Annual Report
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting
February	1 st	Project Submissions Deadline for Annual Town Meeting
	1 st	CPC Annual Report due to Town Administrator
	1st Monday	Project Applicant updates-quarterly report
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting
March	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for Applicant Presentations
	1st Monday	Prepare Warrant Articles <i>Ongoing Warrant Articles</i> Administrative Reserve Transfer Affordable Housing Reserve to Affordable Housing Trust Bond Payment - Pell Farm Bond Payment - Town House <i>Community Project Submissions</i>
	1st Monday	Meet with CPC Treasurer to determine warrant article funding sources
	2nd Monday	Review and Sign Monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting – Applicant Presentations
	45 days prior to TM	Submit Warrant Articles to Town Administrator
April	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for Grantwriting Workshop
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting – Grantwriting Workshop
May	1st Monday	Project Applicant updates-quarterly report
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	2nd Monday	Annual Town Meeting
	3rd Monday	Prepare and mail Project Agreements to Applicants
	4th Thursday	No Monthly Meeting
June	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for June Annual Public Hearing and for July Project Submission Deadline
	1st Monday	Submit ad to Grafton News for Annual Public Hearing
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Public Hearing
	4th Thursday	Monthly meeting - Reorganize committee; Elect officers
	4th Thursday	Submit Committee Reorganization Report to Town Clerk

July	1 st	Project Submission Deadline for Semi-Annual Town Meeting
	1st Monday	Submit completed CPC project account close-outs to Town Accountant
	1st Monday	Update CPC Project Spreadsheet (internal report)
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting
August	1st Monday	Project Applicant updates-quarterly report
	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for Applicant Presentations
	1st Monday	Prepare Warrant Articles
		<i>Ongoing Warrant Articles</i>
		Affordable Housing Reserve
		Historic Preservation Reserve
		Open Space Reserve
		Affordable Housing Correct 10% Set Aside Estimate
		Historic Preservation Correct 10% Set Aside Estimate
		Open Space Correct 10% Set Aside Estimate
		<i>Community Project Submissions</i>
	1st Monday	Meet with CPC Treasurer to determine warrant article funding sources
September	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting – Applicant Presentations
	45 days prior to TM	Submit Warrant Articles to Town Administrator
	1st Monday	Prepare Annual CPC CP-3 Filing
		(Community Preservation Projects Report, including Annual Affordable Housing Trust Report)
October	2nd Monday	Review and Sign Monthly Financial Management Report
	15th	Deadline to submit CP-3 Report to Mass. DOR
	4th Thursday	Monthly Meeting
	4th Thursday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
November	3rd Monday	Semi-Annual Town Meeting
	4th Thursday	Prepare and mail Project Agreements to Applicants
	4th Thursday	No Monthly Meeting
	1st Monday	Prepare publicity for Grantwriting Workshop
	1st Monday	Project Applicant updates-quarterly report
December	1st Monday	Monthly Meeting: Annual Grant Writing Workshop
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	1st Monday	Monthly Meeting
	2nd Monday	Review and sign monthly Financial Management Report
	3 rd Monday	Update CPC Plan

Appendices:

6. Public Engagement Summary
7. Article 34 of Grafton Town Bylaws
8. Grafton CPA Project Application Instructions
9. Historic Preservation Eligibility Chart
10. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Appendix 1: Public Engagement Summary

Public Forums

A series of three virtual public forums were held to gather input on each of the three CPA program areas. At each session, the consultant provided an interactive presentation describing the Community Preservation Act in Grafton, as well as the community context and assets pertaining to each program area. The presentation led into a discussion about community needs, goals, and opportunities. Following is a summary of the input provided by the participants at each of the forums:

Open Space and Recreation

Assets:

- The category of “Partners” under the Open Space & Recreation category ought to include the Grafton Historic District Commission and the Historical Commission due to the historic open space assets that are under their areas of concern. Also include the Parks & Cemetery Department and Veteran’s Agent
- The town has 279 trails comprising 121 Kilometers.

Goals and Opportunities:

- Previous planning efforts have identified opportunities and community benefits from the creation of additional parks.
- Current efforts to create walking tours to guide people in getting around outside of trails. There are extensive opportunities for walking in the woods, but the town lacks a connected system enabling safe bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to get to local and regional destinations.
 - In the long term (should active use of the rail line be discontinued), a rail trail in place of the Grafton/Upton railroad could help to provide pedestrian/bicycle connectivity across town.
 - The Blackstone River Trail would provide regional connectivity, but is a very large-scale project that has not moved far along yet in Grafton. CMRPC could provide a resource to help with planning and data to support this.
- Opportunity to add to the connected open space along the frontage of Silver Lake.
- There may be a need to expand field space for recreation.
- Improving accessibility of playgrounds is a priority need. Recreation Department is working through tasks identified for parks and recreation facilities in the Town’s ADA Transition Plan in 2019. They may consider a survey on park usage to help with prioritization. The Town has newly reconstituted its Disability Commission.
- School playgrounds: Need to make sure that proposed projects are appropriate to classify as “outdoor recreation”, and to address concern about the limitation on hours that they are open to the public.
- The Recreation Department is looking to expand recreation offerings for “Active Older Adults”. (While the Senior Center is focused on people aged 65+, there is no specific age constraint for the Town’s Recreation Department, thus they have more flexibility to serve anyone who may be

interested in these activities.) It is hoped that the creation of new park space will enable the addition of facilities to accommodate programming for all ages.

- Currently a pickle ball group meets at Ferry Street. The group is growing as the sport grows in popularity for older adults. They now have 3 courts that can be set up on the grass field. Would be demand for more, and would like to see clay courts and possibly lighting.
- May be other groups meeting informally, for example to use the track behind the Senior Center for walking, or ice fishing on Silver lake. If there are groups, they are not formally organized.
- Many older adults and seniors come to Silver Lake to swim laps, but there is not an organized group or time for this activity.
- Would like to see paddle-boarding as a recreational program.
- Would like to see more boat launches installed, especially ADA-accessible. Some existing boat launches are hard to access because they get too weedy. An inventory of existing boat launch sites and their amenities and condition would be helpful to see what is needed.
 - Organized boating activities? Fin & Feather offers outdoor adventure camp activities in Grafton.

Biggest priorities for Open Space & Recreation:

- Connected pedestrian/bicycle trail network
- Increased handicapped accessibility
- Accommodate wider range of recreational needs to serve all ages.



“Word Cloud” responses to a question of what projects participants would like to see in the next five years

Community Housing

Assets:

- Add NOAH to list of partners.
- Are the town’s current SHI units permanently affordable? All of the rental units are. There are a large number of ownership units which are deed restricted in perpetuity but the AHT tracks these units to ensure that they are not lost from the inventory due to resale or outdated deed riders.
- Tufts students occupy a lot of rental housing in the community. (Perception? Look at data on renter household composition.) Anecdotally there are groups of students are renting single family homes. Tufts has not been a partner in housing students, but could potentially contribute or support new development in North Grafton.

Goals and Opportunities:

- Workforce, middle class housing is lacking. Would contribute toward a goal of economic recovery.
- Would like to reach 10% SHI. However the 10% target does not mean that the town is meeting local needs. The inclusion of market rate rentals means that not all of the units will be affordable when they reach 10% (assuming that there will be mixed-income rental developments in the future).
- AHT is exploring, working on development on Town-owned land.
- Redevelopment opportunities: Fisherville Mill site (40R); adaptive reuse of the remaining Wuskanut mill building.
- Downpayment assistance is a low priority because there is program through MassHousing that provides this. No need to duplicate funding. Providing deep down-payment subsidies in exchange for a deed restriction is challenging because of the hot real estate market. Homes are too expensive and/or bought up too quickly to enable the AHT or subsidized buyers to compete.

Priority Housing Needs

- A lack of affordable housing presents an obstacle for economic development, as there is a lack of housing affordable to employees of local businesses. Workers in local businesses consistently live two towns away.
- Entry level housing is particularly challenging. People who grow up in Grafton cannot afford to live here when they move out on their own.
- People cannot afford to stay in Grafton when they retire. Senior housing is a priority need.
- People who have an interest in living in Grafton but currently live elsewhere because they can't afford Grafton.

Historic Preservation

- Historic preservation projects have generally been well-supported. Higher cost projects have also tended to be high priority projects. Lower priority projects may be supported anyway if the funding requests are small.
- Would like to preserve assets that contribute to historic character, such as New England Village in North Grafton (perhaps façade restoration to support village center businesses).
- Municipal properties:
 - Older fire houses. South Grafton has already been preserved with CPA funds. Fire station in Grafton Center currently used for storage for School Department equipment. Would cost \$400,000+ to restore it to condition so that it could be used for public purposes. Have been some discussions about demolishing the building to use for parking.
 - Tree Barn in North Grafton. Part of district that has been studied for rezoning. Preservation of the barn would be included as part of a RFP for disposition after the new DPW building is completed. Currently in need of repainting, but presence of lead paint makes the project expensive, inappropriate for support by volunteers or Job Corps.

- Historical Society has long-term lease on former library in South Grafton. Some additional rehab/restoration and accessibility work may be needed for this.
- Town House. Still needs masonry work and to restore windows. Both will be very big jobs and may need to be phased over several years.
- Library. Major work needed on the historic portion of the library has already been funded under the current construction project. However, some additional needs may be identified down the road which could be CPA-eligible.
- Bandstand on the Town Common. Could be restored to the original design.
- Private organizations could seek funding:
 - Willard House had considered CPA in the past but sought a different funding source as they were concerned about committing to a Historic Preservation Restriction as a condition.
 - Nipmuc Homestead may continue preservation efforts with CPA funds.
 - State Police Learning Center. Fire-damaged older building – potential for restoration or adaptive reuse?
- Religious and fraternal organizations:
 - None that are seen as under threat currently
 - Former church that the library is currently occupying is well-suited for public use but is not historic.
 - Must be careful in determining the eligibility of church projects, but CPA funds can be used for projects that restore exterior, nonreligious elements.
- Other assets:
 - Old bridges. Named some including “Baptist Bridge” on Pleasant Street at Pullard Road, Depot Street Bridge, Pony Truss bridge.
 - Archeological sites, cemeteries, artifacts.
 - Viewsheds. Ten significant viewsheds identified in Heritage Landscape Inventory study. Land Trust keeps track of priority properties for acquisition.
 - Wuskanut Mill in South Grafton. As only remaining major mill structure in South Grafton, this would be a high priority to preserve, but very challenging and expensive. Under private ownership, could be a candidate for adaptation to commercial or residential use.
 - Private homes and barns? Could potentially be eligible for CPA where they are visible from the street and contribute to historic character, but would be a low priority if they do not also entail public purposes such as public/institutional use, affordable housing, or economic development. A small grant program could potentially allow for projects like exterior restoration of historic houses, if a specific pool of funds were set aside and administered through an entity such as the Historical Commission that homeowners could apply to. (Would likely need a nonprofit partner to administer such a program.)

Historic Preservation Priorities

- 1) Prevent the loss of historic buildings
- 2) Create or expand community engagement with Grafton history
- 3) Preserve or enhance curb appeal of Grafton villages and neighborhoods

Interviews

The consultant met remotely with Town staff and representatives from some partner organizations to learn about their perspectives on community needs and opportunities in each of the program areas, as well as to learn about their experience with the CPA funding process. Interviewees included

Planning/Conservation Department (Chris McGoldrick, Leah Cameron, Natalia Alward, John Allen)
Council on Aging/Housing Authority (Barbara Connelly, Lisa Kelley, Amanda Brady)
Veterans Services (Justin Sousa)
School Department (Dr. James Cummings)
Parks & Recreation (Jen Andersen)
Library (Beth Gallaway)
Dept. of Public Works (Paul Cornoyer)
Town Administrator (Tim McNerney)
Grafton Historical Society (Nancy Therrian)
Habitat for Humanity Metro West (Deborah Hoak)

Following are highlights of ideas and observations shared through these interviews:

- Need to increase awareness of CPA projects and the CPC's process.
 - Signage
 - Advertising
 - Information session about application process and timeline
- Priority needs over the next five years:
 - Rental/mortgage assistance
 - Protect waterbodies – invasive species removal/treatment
 - North Grafton – hospital reuse, affordable housing, trails
 - Mill villages revitalization/reuse
 - Planning for Blackstone Trail, walking/bicycle infrastructure in general
- Coordinated investment of CPA funds.
 - Community needs and priorities can be drawn from prior planning studies.
 - Planning and stakeholder dialogues (i.e., “summit” meeting for historic preservation, affordable housing, etc.)
 - Need to continue coordinating project proposals with Town staff to identify potential efficiencies and cost-savings. Review of proposals by Development Team meeting would be helpful.
 - Need to coordinate with Capital Plan, Finance Committee
- CPA is critical to funding outdoor recreation facilities improvements and historic preservation of Town-owned assets in the current fiscal climate – cannot count on funding for capital needs.
- Recreation priorities include ADA accessibility, canoe launches, and replacing recreation facilities at the end of their lifespan.
- Neighborhood parks currently serve a limited range of recreation needs.
- Elementary school playgrounds are in need of updates and accessibility improvements. School playgrounds are relatively low in priority amidst the capital improvement needs for all school facilities, for which funds are limited.

- The Recreation Department is working on recreation options for all ages, including cooperation with Senior Center and schools. Would like to incorporate more fitness facilities and programming appropriate for older adults. Currently seniors are using track, trails, pickle ball.
- Potential for CPA to support development of pedestrian/bicycle path in conjunction with North Grafton TOD development. May be able to get some funding for planning and/or construction of components of the path from private developers but will need additional funding sources to complete the project.
- Open space acquisition priorities:
 - Protected habitat;
 - Potential for expanding connected open space network, natural wildlife corridors;
 - Lands identified as priority parcels in OSRP.
- Future historic preservation needs for library may include repair of masonry, chimney, replacement of slate roof, window repair.
- Rehabilitation work needed on Historical Society building: accessibility improvements, windows, HVAC, storage. Also artifacts preservation project(s) on the horizon.
- Municipal buildings: currently no space needs among municipal departments. Prior DPW property and Tree Barn will be put out to bid for redevelopment/adaptive reuse. The Center Fire Station is likely to continue being used for storage by the School Department for some time.
- Veteran's agent works with Cemetery Superintendent and Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Committee to maintain and restore war memorials and monuments. Annual budget allows for small repairs and restoration projects.
- Need to increase communication/collaboration between housing stakeholders (AHT, Boards, Housing Authority, Senior Center, Planning Department, regional housing services and development partners). Cross-membership between AHT, Select Board, and CPC can help to streamline decision processes.
- Increasingly difficult for Grafton families and seniors to find housing they can afford – housing prices and taxes are increasing, waiting lists are extremely long, and the state's centralized housing waiting list prioritizes emergency cases and veterans ahead of local residents for Housing Authority units.
- Potential to expand Housing Authority inventory or to manage additional properties through partnership with developer.
- Especially need rental housing for mixed ages and more housing options appropriate for seniors (condos, apartments, and/or senior housing). Homeownership support is also needed.
- Habitat Metro West works with communities to evaluate feasibility and development strategies for potential affordable housing projects. Sites typically come from Town-owned property, tax-title, acquisition, or donations. Helps for specific projects to have a member of the AHT specified as a point of contact and advocate.

Survey

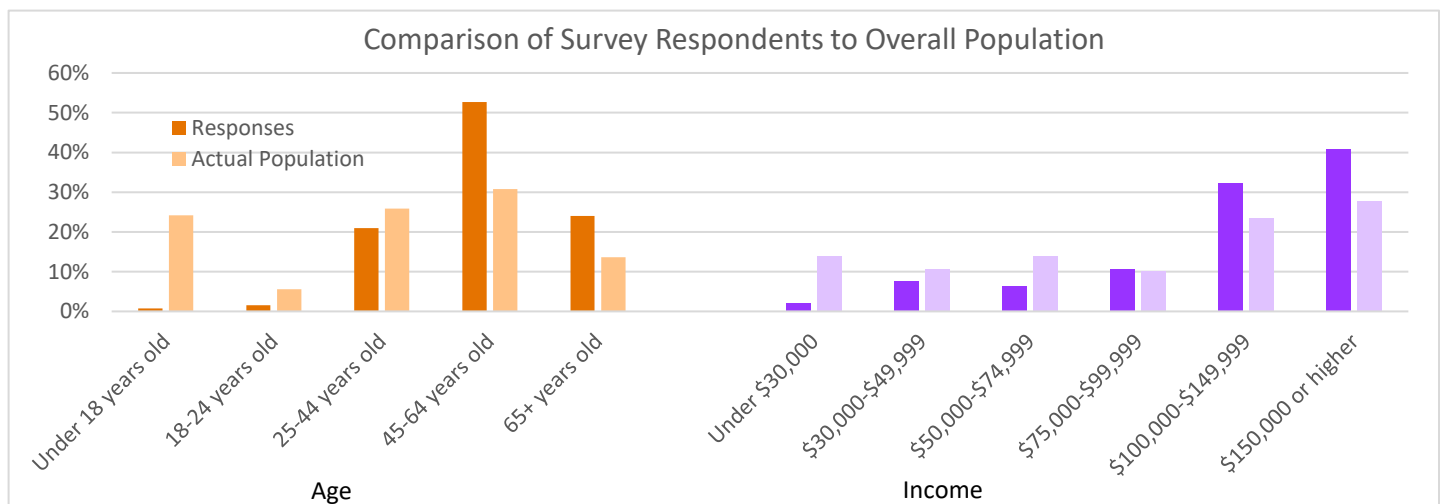
The Community Preservation Committee conducted a survey of Grafton residents to gather input about goals and priorities for community preservation funding. A total of 131 responses were received throughout the months of May and June, 2020. The survey was available online and was shared widely through the Town's website and social media; through boards and committees; newsletters for the Library, Senior Center, and Recreation Department; via stakeholder organizations; and at the annual Town Meeting held in June.

The results of this survey are an expression of public opinion about the priorities, goals, and preferences for types of projects that might be paid for with CPA funds. They do not necessarily equate to community needs and opportunities, which have been identified through a combination of data analysis, review of prior planning, and consultation with Town departments, boards and commissions, and community organizations. When evaluating specific funding proposals, the Committee will use its discretion to consider input from other stakeholders, as well as characteristics of specific development proposals, along with survey results.

Part 1: Demographic Profile

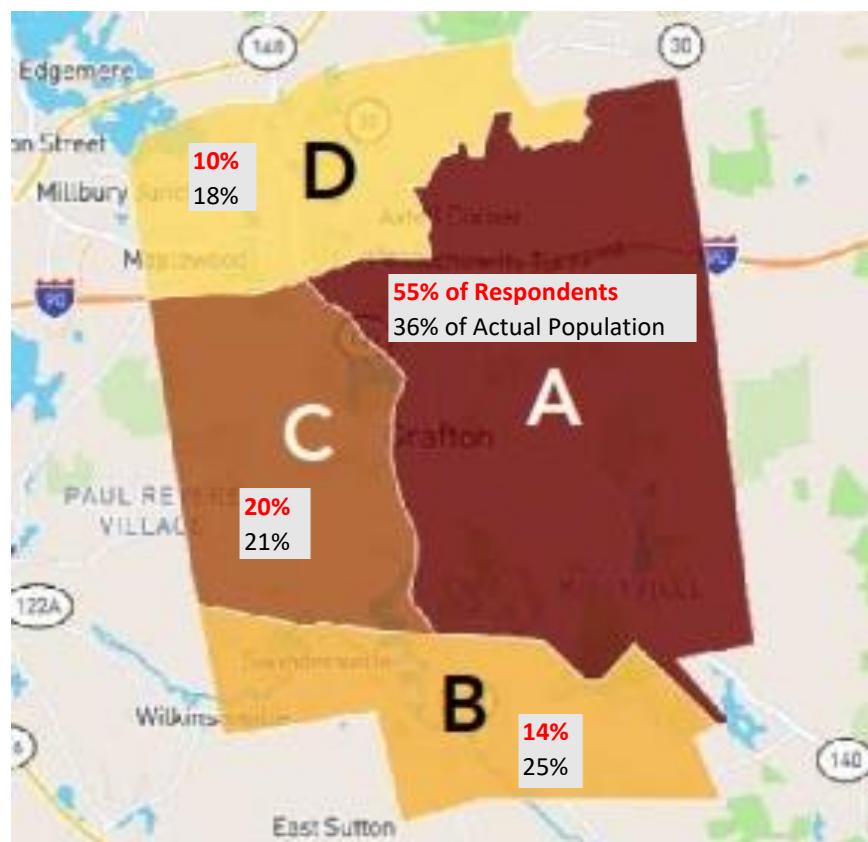
The survey included a set of questions to collect information about respondents to gauge how the survey respondents represent Grafton's population overall.

- Survey-takers are disproportionately middle aged. More than half of survey takers are between the ages of 45-64 years old while this age group comprises less than one third of Grafton's population.
- 59, or 88% of respondents have children under the age of 17 in their households, compared with 37% of Grafton households overall. Of these, a higher share have children between the ages of 10 and 17.
- The number of respondents who report having members of their households with disabilities is proportionate to the Town overall, at 19%.
- People who responded to the survey also tended to have higher incomes. Of the survey respondents who provided an income range, 41% have incomes higher than \$150,000, while 32% have incomes between \$100,000 and \$149,999. By contrast, approximately 10% of those who took the survey have incomes below \$50,000, and 17% have incomes between \$50,000 and \$100,000.



- Almost all of the respondents (129) live in Grafton. One respondent works, but does not live in Grafton, while 19 Grafton residents either work or study in town.
- Only 2 survey respondents identified themselves as renters. 95% of respondents own their own homes, while five respondents (4 percent) indicated some other living arrangement.
- Of 107 survey respondents who identified their race/ethnicity, 105 were White or Caucasian, one identified as Black or African American, and one identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Respondents were asked to identify where they live in town using a map depicting Census Tracts. A disproportionate share of respondents live in the eastern central side of town (55 percent, compared with 36 percent of the town's actual population). South Grafton and North Grafton are most under-represented in the survey results.



Part 2: Open Space and Recreation

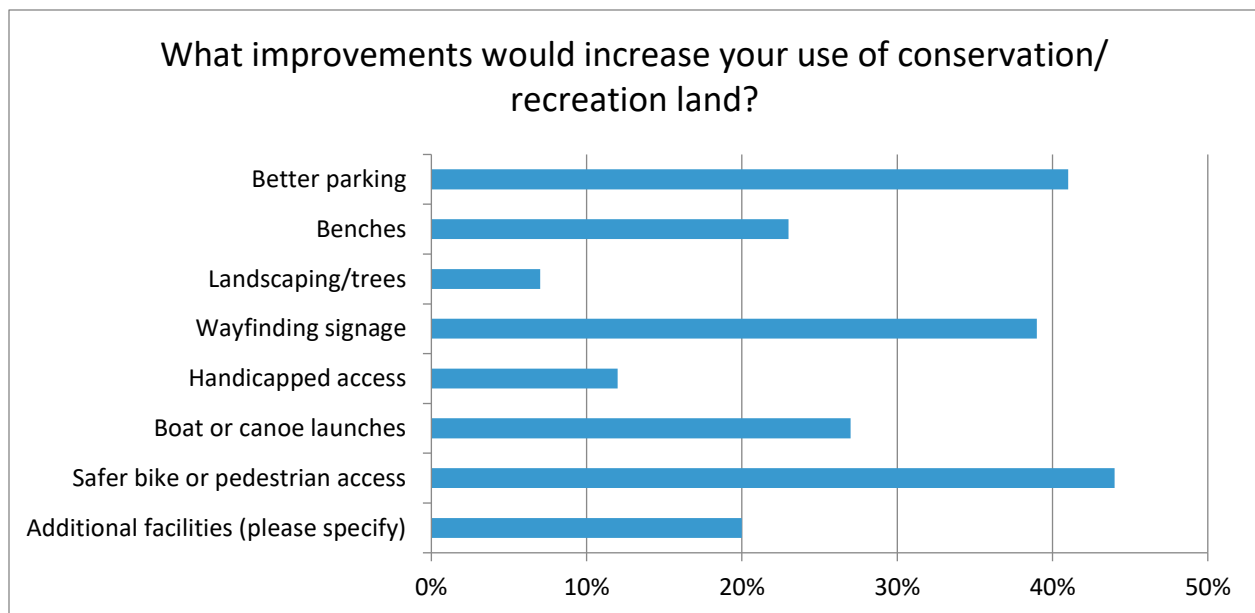
The following set of questions asked participants to share their experiences and observations regarding open space and recreation facilities in Grafton.

Participants were asked about the frequency with which they visit several types of recreation facilities in town. Of these, natural resource areas are frequented the most, including conservation lands and trails followed by ponds, lakes and rivers. Athletic fields and outdoor recreation facilities also receive

frequent use. Parks and playgrounds and Silver Lake Beach are frequented by a smaller portion of respondents.

	Never	1-5 times per year	5-10 times per year	10-15 times per year	More than 15 times per year	Weighted Average
Conservation lands & trails	16%	30%	16%	11%	28%	3.06
Ponds, lakes, and rivers	28%	30%	17%	8%	17%	2.55
Athletic fields and outdoor recreation facilities	33%	28%	13%	3%	23%	2.54
Parks & playgrounds	39%	31%	13%	3%	13%	2.20
Silver Lake Beach	56%	23%	9%	6%	5%	1.81

Asked about what improvements would increase respondents' use of conservation and recreation land, improving access through better parking and safer pedestrian and bicycle access received the strongest response, along with wayfinding signage.



Other responses:

- A central facility for all to use
- Restrooms (2x)
- Purchase more land (2x)
- More ADA accessible facilities (x2)
- Improved trail maintenance
- Pickleball
- Mountain bike specific trails
- Better online maps of parking and trails
- Higher daily use fees to reduce tax burden
- Enhance and repair current playgrounds and trails
- General upkeep of parks and playground like Ferry St. and Riverside
- Soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, larger play structures
- Skate park and central community park

Participants were asked how important it is to preserve or enhance various types of resources. Natural resources are of highest importance to respondents, in particular water resources for drinking water supply and surface waters and wetlands, as well as wildlife habitats and corridors. Lands of cultural importance, such as historic sites, scenic areas and views, and agricultural land are of moderate

importance to respondents. The lowest priority for preservation and enhancement is recreation and athletic facilities.

	Not Important or Somewhat Important	Very Important or Extremely Important	Weighted Average
Rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, vernal pools	19%	81%	4.09
Agricultural land	30%	70%	3.71
Scenic areas and views	23%	77%	3.79
Historic sites	22%	78%	3.96
Wildlife habitats/corridors	14%	86%	4.16
Water supply, wells, aquifers	12%	88%	4.40
Recreation and athletic facilities	51%	49%	3.04

The survey provided some suggested goals for open space and recreation, and examples of potential projects that might be funded with CPA.

- There is strong agreement with the goal of preserving open space for natural resource protection. Among types of activities that align with this goal, preserving drinking water and critical habitat areas is a higher priority than habitat restoration and pollution prevention, however both types of activities are highly supported.
- Respondents also supported the suggested goal to improve access to open space and recreation for all Grafton residents, but with less agreement. Increasing handicapped accessibility and improving trails and bicycle and pedestrian paths were most strongly supported, while expanding and improving playgrounds and athletic facilities were priorities for a minority of respondents. Improving access to water-based recreation received a slightly stronger endorsement.

	Do not support or slightly support	Moderately or strongly support	Not Sure	Weighted Average
CPA funds should be used to preserve open space for natural resource protection and passive recreation.	9%	91%	0%	3.54
a. Ensure permanent protection of land to protect drinking water and critical habitat areas	7%	92%	1%	3.68
b. Habitat restoration and pollution prevention projects	13%	87%	0%	3.45
CPA funds should be used to improve access to open space and recreation for all Grafton residents.	21%	79%	0%	3.27
a. Expand & improve playgrounds and parks	53%	46%	0%	2.47
b. Improve access to water-based recreation	39%	59%	2%	2.73
c. Increase handicapped accessibility of parks and playgrounds	22%	75%	3%	3.17
d. Expand & improve trails and bicycle/pedestrian paths	15%	83%	3%	3.36
e. Expand & improve athletic fields & outdoor facilities	52%	45%	3%	2.54

Respondents were invited to comment on specific open space/recreation projects they would like to see CPA funds be used for. As the survey took place during the months leading up to the Annual Town

Meeting, many of the comments focused on the proposed Grafton Community Park (“Superpark”), a project that the CPC had recommended for funding but which ultimately did not receive Town Meeting approval. There were 12 comments in support of the park, along with 8 explicitly opposed to the park and 5 that expressed a preference for improving and refurbishing existing parks, playgrounds, and athletic fields. Additional responses highlighted a variety of facilities or improvements as shown below:

- Safe bicycle and pedestrian paths, trails between parks, marked bike lanes on roadways (x4)
- Grafton Loop Trail connecting existing trail systems around Grafton.
- Improving and obtaining more open space. (x2)
- Evaluating each playground in town and beginning to improve both access for disabled adults and equipment to be used by children with disabilities. (x2)
- Access and programming for senior citizens. (x2) “I am looking forward to making the Engvall gift usable for people of all ages and abilities. I currently use the trails a lot, but between the fact that I am very allergic to poison ivy and am 65+ years old, I would welcome walking and recreation areas that are safer for me.”
- Parking at athletic fields
- Expand parking at town beach. Address disparity between number of baseball and softball fields.
- amphitheater/pavilion to combine nature and art.
- Dog park
- Hayes Pond
- Pickleball park

Part 3: Historic Preservation

Participants were asked about the importance of various types of resources to Grafton’s history and identity. Town-owned buildings, documents and collections, and cemeteries and archeological sites are of highest importance to survey respondents, followed by historic sites associated with the Blackstone canal and industrial history. Few respondents felt that former state hospital buildings are important to the town’s identity.

	Not Important or Somewhat Important	Very Important or Extremely Important	Weighted Average
Historic Town-owned buildings	31%	69%	2.91
Former state hospital buildings	80%	20%	1.83
Other historic institutional buildings	64%	36%	2.29
Historic homes or commercial buildings	61%	39%	2.39
Blackstone canal and industrial remnants	52%	48%	2.45
Archeological sites	38%	62%	2.75
Cemeteries	38%	62%	2.80
Documents and collections	40%	60%	2.73

Asked what historic resources are most at risk, a variety of responses included all of the types of resources mentioned above. Frequently mentioned were Native American and archeological sites, documents and collections, and historic buildings (in general or specific buildings).

- Not sure - important to preserve history of town and its origins.
- Town-owned buildings due to lack of funds within the town to maintain them.
- Grafton Historical Society Museum is a critical resource for any historical preservation activity.
- Historic buildings because of cost to fix and/or maintain.

- Historic buildings and archeological sites.
- All historic buildings from pressure to develop additional commercial and housing projects.
- State hospital grounds and buildings.
- Barn in the center of town by the RR tracks.
- Depot Street [Wuskanot] Mill - Expensive to repair/preserve and repurpose.
- North Main Street area from Washington Mills to Tufts.
- The Blackstone Canal area is in complete disarray. The entire area on 122A needs more revitalization, across from Mill Villages and the area further south where a dangerous and abandoned building sits.
- Hassanamesit Woods.
- Nipmuc Reservation. Their history is so important to the overall story of Grafton, but there seems to be little support in town for them.
- Native wisdom, old mills, native trails and sites.
- Historic cemeteries due to the lack of general care and grooming which makes them seem to be an insignificant historical site when they're quite the opposite. If better cared for they could also be a space for people to come to and learn about town history and use the area for recreation.
- Fisherville Pond and the area leading up to it has become increasingly choked with invasive plants, specifically water chestnut, over the years, making recreational use of it almost impossible starting in mid-June.
- Documents and collections, they are irreplaceable and cannot be recreated. (3x)

The next question asked respondents whether they would support various types of historic preservation projects that could be funded with CPA. The level of support was fairly consistent across all of the project types listed, with about two-thirds moderately or strongly supporting each type. Preserving and providing public access to sites and structures significant to Grafton's history received slightly higher support, while preserving and restoring documents and artifacts received slightly lower support.

	Do not support or slightly support	Moderately or strongly support	Not Sure	Weighted Average
Restoration of Town-owned buildings	29%	68%	3%	2.95
Preservation of non-profit or institutional buildings for community use or cultural facilities	30%	67%	3%	2.95
To preserve and provide public access to sites and structures significant to Grafton's history	23%	75%	2%	3.08
To rehabilitate historic buildings for conversion to affordable housing	31%	66%	3%	3.00
To preserve and restore documents and artifacts and public access to them	36%	61%	3%	2.85

Respondents offered the following comments in response to whether there are specific historic preservation projects they would like to see CPA funds be used for:

- Preservation of community access spaces, i.e., Grafton Common.
- I would love to see overall accessibility to the public involving historic landmarks, locations and documents.
- I think we have done plenty at One Grafton Common [Grafton Town House].

- Document preservation and online public access. (2x)
- Maintenance and restoration of the old South Grafton library building.
- Center of Grafton as a walkable and accessible gathering place.

Part 4: Affordable Housing

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for different housing priorities. Note that the responses provided in the survey for questions pertaining to affordable housing erroneously omitted an option for "Strongly Agree". This disparity was pointed out by several respondents in the comments for this section, who indicated that they would have chosen "Strongly Agree". (In the following analysis, responses are weighted on the same scale as the other sections of the survey, despite the different wording of the choices.) Some respondents indicated that they would like to see a higher emphasis on affordable housing priorities over other categories, and would like to see the Affordable Housing Trust request and utilize a larger share of CPA funds. There was also one comment that new buildings and renovations should be made with improved efficiency and green standards (passive solar/well insulated/etc).

Survey responses generally showed strong support for all of the suggested priorities. The highest level of agreement was around housing designed and affordable to seniors and people with disabilities. Adapting historic buildings to create affordable housing and providing housing near mixed use villages, commuter rail, and large employers were also more strongly supported. There was a more mixed response to using Town-owned property to creating affordable housing, or to priorities that focused on the income level of households targeted for affordable housing.

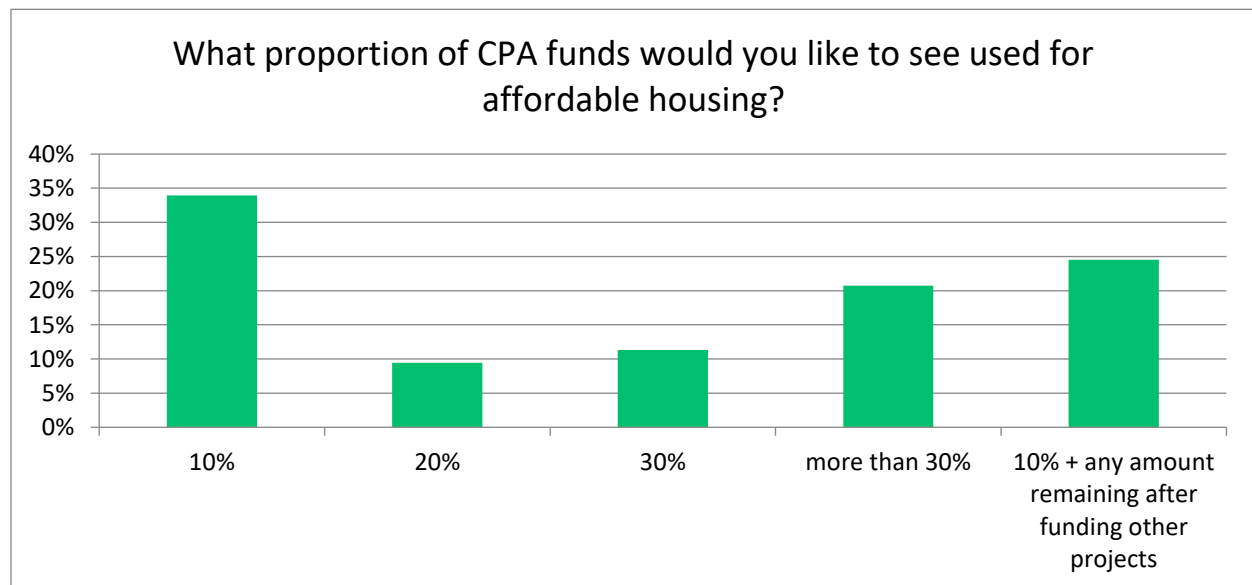
	Strongly disagree or somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree or agree	Not Sure	Weighted Average
Housing affordable to lower income households, with an emphasis on those earning less than \$50,000 per year	15%	78%	7%	3.37
Housing designed for and affordable to seniors and/or disabled residents	5%	90%	5%	3.68
Housing affordable to people who work in Grafton	16%	79%	5%	3.32
More diverse housing styles; in particular rental housing of all sizes, and modest-sized housing appropriate for smaller households	17%	77%	6%	3.36
Housing located near mixed use villages, commuter rail, and large employers	15%	83%	2%	3.43
Use Town-owned property to create affordable housing	20%	77%	3%	3.23
Adapt historic mills, institutional buildings, or residences to create affordable housing	9%	90%	1%	3.48

The next question asked respondents to indicate their support for suggested goals and examples of types of projects that might be associated with these goals. A majority of respondents supported both suggested goals of helping low and moderate income households to access affordable housing, as well as to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing, with a stronger emphasis on the latter. Among project examples, preventing the loss of affordable units received the strongest level of support, followed by rehabilitating existing homes to create affordable units, and providing temporary

rental assistance. Support was mixed for purchasing deed restrictions to reduce the cost for first-time homebuyers or for developing new multifamily units.

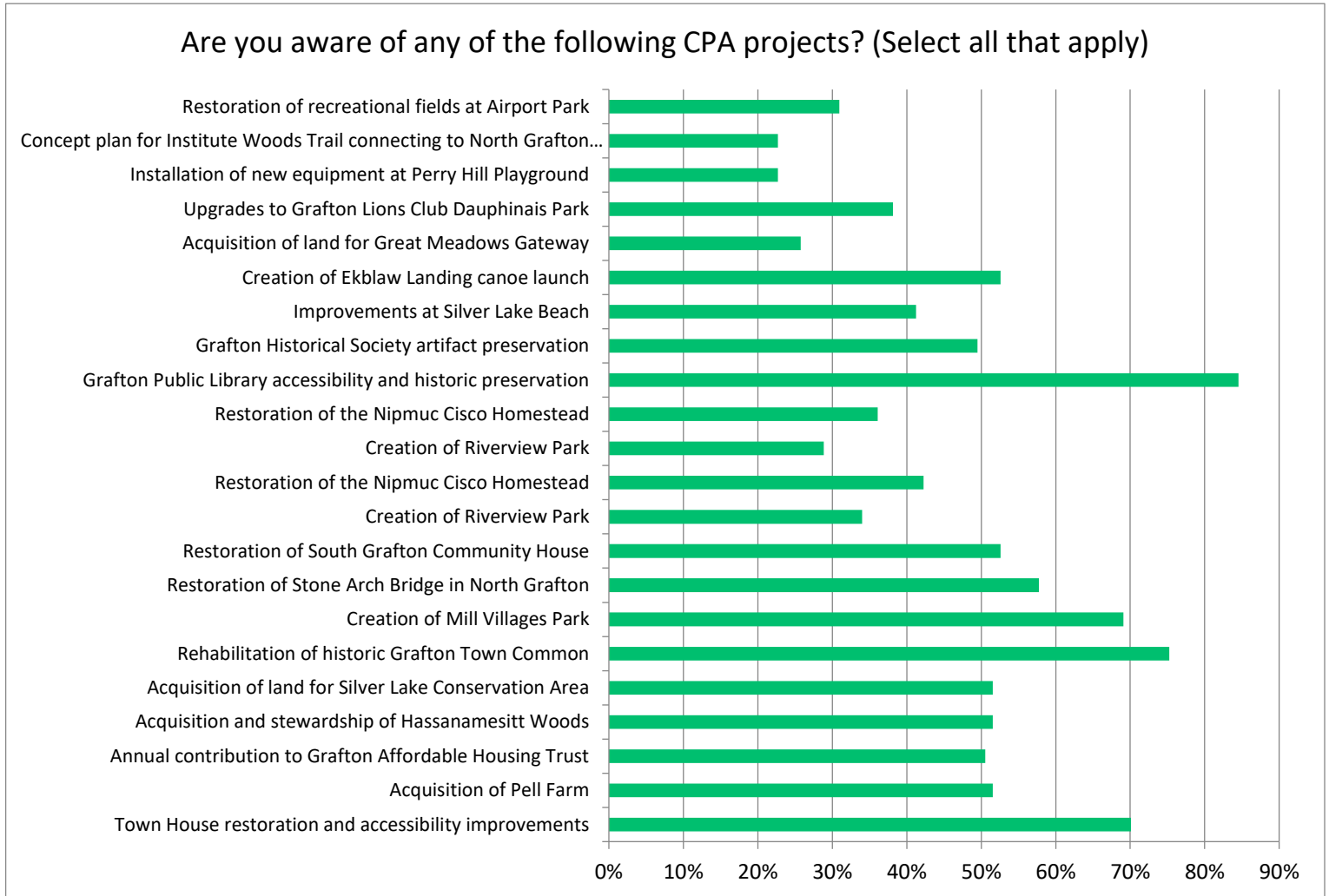
	Strongly disagree or somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree or agree	Not Sure	Weighted Average
CPA funds should be used to help low and moderate income households access affordable housing.	20%	72%	8%	3.22
a. Temporary rental assistance for households experiencing an economic crisis	22%	72%	6%	3.22
b. Purchase deed restrictions to reduce the cost for first time homebuyers	26%	57%	17%	2.84
CPA funds should be used to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing.	20%	75%	5%	3.28
a. Develop new multifamily units through adaptive reuse or brownfield redevelopment	22%	71%	7%	3.07
b. Rehabilitate existing homes and apartments to create affordable units	15%	82%	3%	3.29
c. Prevent existing affordable units from converting to market rate	11%	80%	9%	3.44

The next question asked respondents to indicate whether they would like to see a higher proportion of CPA funds be spent on affordable housing than the minimum 10%. One-third of responses were in favor of maintaining the minimum level of funding, while two-thirds were in favor of increasing the level of spending in the affordable housing category.



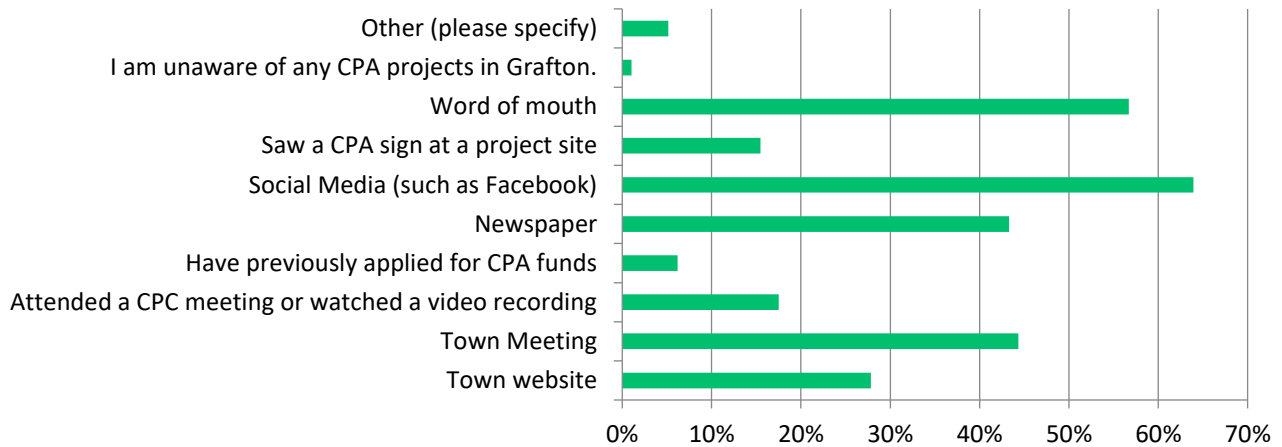
Part 6: CPA Awareness

The survey provided a list of project sites that Grafton has funded with CPA since its adoption (appearing in order of the total amount of funding provided.) The projects with the highest level of awareness include the Grafton Public Library, Town Common, Town House restoration, and the creation of Mill Villages Park.



Respondents were most likely to have heard about these projects via social media. (This may be influenced by the fact that the survey itself was conducted online.) Word of mouth, Town Meeting, and the newspaper were also strong sources of information. Respondents less frequently obtained information via the Town website or by attending CPA meetings. CPA signs at project sites were infrequently observed. Other sources of information offered included Select Board meetings or the Recreation Department.

How did you learn about the projects? (select all that apply)



Following are additional comments provided by respondents (omitting comments specifically about the Superpark, as the project was voted on in Town Meeting before the completion of this plan).

- Projects should be weighed on how they create or enhance a sense of community.
- We need to invest in infrastructure and improving pedestrian accessibility. This town needs more sidewalks and crosswalks, especially in the Grafton high school area.
- I strongly feel that enough CPA funds have been spend on the Grafton Common and its surrounding area. It's beautiful. Please move into other areas of town.
- Please focus efforts on areas outside of the town common unless it's affordable housing like 25 Worcester St. I strongly support affordable housing.
- The CPA program has been critical in helping Grafton preserve important open spaces and historic landmarks. I love the idea of repurposing some of the historic state hospital buildings and old mills into affordable housing and senior housing. Our seniors are really limited in terms of affordable, accessible housing.
- Please focus on affordable housing and rental assistance, then historical preservation and upgrades to existing facilities before trying to create new facilities that duplicate existing ones.
- Prepare for the worst and hope for the best; don't spend money foolishly
- I think the emphasis should remain on open space preservation, but with additional attention (and funding) paid toward affordable housing to get the town out from under Ch. 40B threats.
- I believe the community preservation program is really smart and I am glad Grafton participates. But I sometimes think you are spending money on "nice" to do (Town Common) projects and not spending money on "need" to do projects (ADA compliance). The stone arch bridge project was unnecessary and wasteful.
- Affordable housing must be a major priority for the town. Simply doing the bare minimum to meet state requirements is not enough. Please take more extensive action to ensure that low and middle income residents as well as seniors can have affordable places to live, especially during this time of financial uncertainty.